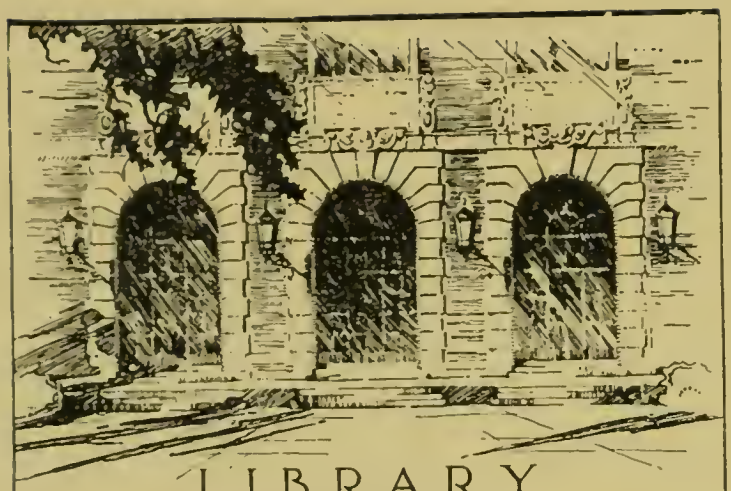

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THE

MASTER OF RIVERSWOOD.

A Novel.

BY

MRS. ARTHUR LEWIS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE MASTER OF RIVERSWOOD.

CHAPTER I.

The winter passed away. Christmas—with its wonderful "Weihnachtsabend" for the young Höffners, when the "grand salon" was thrown open, when wax lights were shining everywhere, when madame was in silk and smiles (she possessed dresses, shawls, and jewels enough to have been a small fortune to a woman "going into society"), when monsieur was beaming, and the guests cheerful, and the beautiful illuminated fir-tree the centre of a wealth of presents—all this was a thing of the past. February came, and the end of February found the English governess weak, ill, and with a wretched cold, that no "cata-

plasmes," "sirops de gommes," or warm "tisanes" did much in the way of shaking off. March, however, came in with genial warmth and sunshine; that, and the doctor's prescriptions combined, conquered at last the worst symptoms of the hacking cough, and braced the over-wrought frame. Madame was kindness itself; Louise considerate and "gentille;" little Fritz sympathising; and even August and Carl exerted themselves to be "sages" over their evening lessons; and if "Madame Anna" coughed much, Louise would often insist on dictating for her.

April was lovely throughout its whole course. It only rained during two days at the beginning of the month, but the rain brought out all the budding green upon the trees, so that in less than a week they were all clothed in green, and you could sit under the shade. Before many days were over the green was as rich and deep as in July; and the chestnuts and lilacs were in full bloom. There was that wonderful elasticity and lightness in the air which makes one feel a joy in life for itself; when merely to live, to breathe, to be, is a gift and a luxury.

There is hardly the possibility of this sort of feeling in the damp and ever-varying climate of England. One has not enough security of bliss. To-day is fine, but to-morrow it may be pouring; to-day there is a delicious warmth in the air, but to-morrow a keen wind will arise.—Where the sun is kinder and truer, people are eating, drinking, reading, working, living out of doors; while we pass from snow to sleet, or from a few days of spring warmth to winter's bitter cold and cutting wind. In those fair, far countries, one can abandon oneself to the sense of enjoyment—to the love of, and trust in life! Under those trees, near those violet beds, with those roses climbing the trunk of the lime-tree, with those cherries, or plums, or oranges tumbling about us; with the scent of flowering shrubs upon the air; with the cloudless deep-blue heaven spread out above — amid all this we can enjoy ourselves "deliciously" to-day, and to-morrow and to-morrow;—in April can fix on a day for a garden-party in June, or plan a fortnight's tour for September, and know it will be fine and fair when the time comes!

But we will write of such bliss no more! As we sit half-frozen, close by a great fire, with doors and windows tightly closed, a leaden sky visible without, and a cutting north-easter roaring over the land, and chilling the very marrow of the bones, let us try and console ourselves by reflecting that it is sometimes very hot indeed in those lovely lands; rather hotter, in fact, from May to the end of August, than is quite pleasant. It is our only consolation: let us hug it to our hearts, and warm ourselves a little with it, if we can.

One day as Madame Anna sat out of doors, with her eldest pupil, under the shade of some poplar trees, Louise reading her "Magasin pour les jeunes Personnes" at a little round wooden table, while her governess made crochet-work—it happened that the former said to the latter, "Why did Mdlle. Isabelle go away from here, Louise? Did your mamma wish it, or did she go of her own accord?" Nora's heart beat a little, as she put the question.

"Oh, mademoiselle," answered Louise, looking up from her book for a moment, "she went of her own accord at the last.

She was going, you know, but not so soon. She was to have stayed the year through."

"And why didn't she?" asked Nora, whose heart (she was still weak) began now to beat so fast that she had to put down her work for a few minutes, and wait.

"Well, mademoiselle," answered Louise, with one of her half-smiles, "mamma told us at the time not to talk about it to people; but I don't think she cares now—in fact I know she doesn't; so I will tell you if you like. We were all going away to Switzerland, to recover from the hooping cough; that is, mamma, Fritz, Hilda, and myself. Papa did not wish mademoiselle to come with us; he wanted her to stay at home, partly to see how things went on, I suppose; and partly because he didn't care for the expense of sending her to Switzerland. She wasn't to have anything to do, not even the wash to make out—papa is so strange you know, madame!—and he intended to lock the garden gates when he went away to town in the morning, so that no one could get either in or out. He also suddenly sent away the cook, who had been

with us some time, and who had some sense, and beaucoup de cœur—because, he said, she would not be wanted. Mdlle. Isabelle was to be left for a month alone, with only the femme de chambre (for I must tell you François, our gardener, had just been sent away, too), and see nobody but papa and the boys, when they came home at night. It was not a delightful prospect, was it, madame ?"

"I should not think, indeed! Well—what did she do ?"

"It seems, madame," pursued Louise, "that when her parents—in England, you understand—heard we were going to Switzerland without her, they wrote to tell her to come home at once, rather than be left here without mamma. She wrote back to say she was not afraid of stopping, and would rather finish her year, if they would allow her. But on the very evening before we went, papa commenced unfolding all his plans to mamma, at dinner-time (in German, you know, but mademoiselle understood German), and Mdlle. Isabelle, who had not been 'trop heureuse' before, as one could see, seemed to get nervous and frightened.

She only took a few spoonsful of soup—and then sat back in her chair for a long time, in silence. All at once she asked mamma if she might be excused, and go to her room, as she had a bad head-ache. She went upstairs, and we knew nothing more till after dinner, when I knocked at her door and walked in, and then found she was packing her boxes. I ran shrieking downstairs, followed by August and Carl, who were at my back all the time, and ran into the dining-room saying, "Papa—mamma—mademoiselle fait ses malles, et elle s'en va!" You may just fancy the scene we had, madame. Papa went upstairs, and stormed and raged and swore—enfin, c'était une comédie! . . . Mon Dieu, je ne l'oublierai jamais! Mdlle. wanted to show him the letter of her parents, telling her to come back; she could not find it for some time; at last she went out with it on to the landing, where papa was then, with mamma, and holding it out to him, said, 'Voilà, monsieur, la lettre de mes parents.' Papa crushed it up in his hands, and flung it to the bottom of the stairs, without looking at it. Mdlle. just said 'George, will you bring me up my letter, please?' and then went back into

her room, and finished her packages. She went to Lyons with us in the carriage the next morning, and we put her down at an hotel, where her boxes had been sent, and that was the last we saw of her."

"I suppose she went to Paris, and from Paris home?" inquired Madame Anna, who was not working, but still trembling.

"I suppose so," answered Louise, with indifference, "in fact, she must have done; because mamma had a letter in her handwriting, from somewhere in England; but papa had it sent back unopened."

"She would not care much about that, I suppose, if she were safe with her friends," answered poor Nora. "She was very happy to have a home to go back to!"

"Oh, yes," answered Louise, carelessly. "She had no necessity to stay with us. But she did not want to leave France directly, when she had once come here. Madame, I am going in for some 'sirop,' and wine and water, it is so hot; shall I bring you some?"

Nora had now Mademoiselle Isabelle's career pretty well before her, from its com-

mencement to its end. She knew how she had worked, taught, had patience, borne unjust hints and insinuations without a word, so as to screen Louise and her brothers from blame; how she had worked for madame, done what she could for her in the house, striven always to be cheerful; how she had never complained of the dulness, or the isolation, and would willingly have taught four times as much, and made her pupils work four times as hard, if there had been any possibility of doing either. In spite of all this, however, when finally terrified into leaving, she had been overwhelmed with reproaches, and informed that "she had done nothing to make her worth her food since she came into the house."

"But," said Louise, when continuing the subject, "that was only because papa was angry at her going. You know what papa is, madame!"

These final remarks of Louise were Nora's only, and poor consolation. She felt that she had done so much less, and in so much feebler a manner than Mademoiselle Isabelle, (and was it likely that with the best inten-

tions, a woman in her peculiar and miserable position, with but poor talents, and suffering in health, could compete with a young and energetic girl, fresh from hard work, and good training, fond of teaching, and desirous to teach, and with no weight upon her life and heart to depress and discourage her at every turn?)—she felt, we say, that having accomplished so much less than the teacher who was told she had "accomplished nothing," her own position must be uncertain to the last degree; and doubts arose in her mind as to whether she had not better sever the connection she had formed herself, and trust again to fate, rather than let it be done by another and a rougher hand, and in a rougher and more sudden way.

She had noticed for some time, that monsieur had paid her no sort of attention or consideration; in fact, that he had talked and acted in her presence as if she did not exist. On one occasion he had said at dinner, when speaking in German to his wife—but Nora now understood a good deal of the sort of German which went to make up the "talk" (we cannot say "con-

versation") at the Höffner dinner-table—"You think everybody charming," said monsieur, "whom I consider an 'in-capable' and a 'do-nothing'! We have never the same estimate of anybody's character. You are entirely blind, and see no faults. But I see them well enough for both, thank God!"

Madame told Nora once that she never dared to defend anyone whom monsieur abused, as it only incensed him more against them, and her into the bargain. When madame said this, Nora felt her ground give another shake.

The earthquake that was to uproot her, and fling her on her face, came at last, without warning and without sign.

At the end of April, M. Höffner went to Paris for a week. Before he went, his wife begged him to have his likeness taken for her while he was there. She reminded him that he had promised her for years, "on her next birthday," a photograph of himself, framed, which she could hang up over the canapé in her boudoir. M. Höffner first laughed, then took his wife's hand, and said

she was romantic ; but finally, upon Louise's joining her solicitations to those of her mother, promised to have the likeness taken if he could spare the time.

He returned late one Saturday night, that is, about nine o'clock ; and the elder children, who had heroically resolved to sit up for him, had all become so overwhelmed with sleep, at about half-past eight, that madame had easily persuaded them to go to bed. She and Nora sat at work together in the *salle-à-manger*, Nora being anxious to finish dressing a little doll for Hilda's "fête" on the day following.

Hilda had been very amusing that day, and the governess was entertaining the mother by a recital of mademoiselle's inventions (as they proved to be), concerning various members of her family. "The leg of a grandfather of hers," this romancer of four years old informed her governess, "who was killed in battle, was buried under the 'hermitage,' at the foot of the garden. There was also buried there the body of a little boy, whom she (Hilda) had once 'ainsi tappé,' because he told her father of her breaking off the head of a flower—'qu'il est mort

ensuite!'" She then proceeded to add many interesting particulars concerning an uncle and aunt of hers. The aunt, she said, had nursed her "pendant des années," when she was little, and had then "mouru de fatigue;" all which information, Nora found, upon inquiry, to be entirely false. Madame was laughing over this nonsense, and had commenced a story of her own, relative to Hilda's having been found bathed in tears because "elle se faisait une histoire" of an imaginary poor woman with "twelve children, and nothing for them to eat," when the sharp clang of monsieur's bell made Nora start hurriedly from her chair, and begin collecting her various working materials, that he might not find her downstairs when he came in. She and madame had talked the last of either sense or nonsense they were ever to talk together at St. Pierre or elsewhere.

Nora was crossing the hall with her work-basket, and a "Bon soir, monsieur," when the latter called out, in a rough voice—

"Just put those things down on the console, madame, and come in and speak to me."

He went into the dining-room, put his bag down, and kissed his wife, with a "Wie geht es Frau?" Then he turned towards the governess, who had re-entered the room, shut the door, and seated herself, with her hands resting on the table for support.

"What do you call yourself, Madame Anna, or Madame Osborne, or whatever you may be?" asked Höffner, fixing his eyes upon her.

The insolence of his tone, and look, and manner gave her just enough of pride, and of a sort of desperate courage, to prevent her quailing entirely before him; her hatred of the man bestowed on her the nerve and voice she would have wanted before any one less of a brute. Looking at him steadily, she asked—

"What do you call me, monsieur?"

He answered her by tearing the wrapper off a small roll which he took from his bag, unfolding it, and throwing it down before her. When she looked at it, she saw that it was a photograph of herself, taken in Paris, when she had been there with her husband. It was very lovely, and finished as if on ivory. It had evidently been taken

out of a frame, and had been much crushed, either purposely, accidentally, or unavoidably, in its journey from Paris to X——, but it was herself, and like the coloured photograph which hung in her own drawing-room at Riverswood, and in her husband's dressing-room. She had been taken in full evening dress of white satin and lace, her lovely neck and arms bare, natural flowers in her hair, and her hands slightly holding a half-opened fan upon her lap.

Nora did not touch the picture, for Höffner had managed to throw it face upwards before her; but she looked at it with a violently beating heart, with a deep and painful colour rising to her face, and almost choked with the swelling in her throat.

"Well," said Höffner, "is that you or not?"

"Yes, it is I, monsieur."

"You ran away from your husband, did you?—and you came to France with your lover, who ran away from you?—and then you come and bring your confounded shame, and infamy, and harlotry into the midst of my family, do you? What do you think of yourself now?"

Nora became very white; Madame stood like a statue; but neither of them spoke a word for several moments.

"Is it true, madame?" asked the latter at last, in a low and almost stern voice. Nora opened her lips, but the words would not come. They died in her throat.

"What have you to say for yourself, *sacré diable?*" inquired Höffner, becoming violent. "Speak, and don't sit there like the white-livered cat that you are! Have you any more lies to tell, as you have shown you can tell lies so well?"

Nora looked up. "No," she said, "I have no more to tell, monsieur."

"Then get out of my house, you ——" (it is as well not to attempt any translation of the French terms here employed); "get out with you, bag and baggage, and never let me or one of mine see or hear of you again. You have done nothing since you came into my house to make you worth your salt. I was a fool not to have kicked you out six months ago."

Nora rose; and as she did so, the fellow looking at her with brutal insolence, said—

"And now tell me, Madame 'Chose,' if you please, what *is* your name?"

"Do you think I am going to utter my husband's name to you?" she retorted, driven to bay at last, and almost panting, as she looked him in the face.

"It was Longley, wasn't it?" sneered Höffner. "You weren't his mistress too, I suppose, were you? Probably you were. Who's to know what you are, or what you have been? You came to Paris under his name, but you came to X—— under another. Who's to know that you weren't a common drab of the London streets before you had either of them?"

Every drop of blood the miserable woman had in her boiled with shame and rage at his vile words. *He* to dare to throw a stain on her husband's stainless name!—*he* to dare to invent the base lie of her having been his paramour!—*he* to talk to her of London streets and their attendant shames, who, though he was of too hard a nature, perhaps, to fall under ordinary temptation, was yet of all men the most shameless, cruel, and cowardly in his treatment of all women, good or bad! She was so roused and lashed by his insolent speech, and by the degrading freedom of his hideous

manner towards her, that she forgot shame in indignation.

"Mr. Longley was *my husband!*" she said wildly, "and you shall not dare to disbelieve it. You are not fit to take his name between your lips! You are a cruel, bad, vile man; and he——" Her voice was choked; tears rushed to her eyes, and blinded them. "I do not tell you this," she went on, "because I care what *your* opinion of me is; I say it for your wife's sake, who has been kind to me. . . . . And now, monsieur, you have told me to go, let me go."

"All this is very fine, madame," retorted Höffner, with a sort of forced laugh, "but let me tell you that I do not believe a word you say to me. You are a great liar. You have shown us you know how to lie well. Don't go away thinking you have humbugged me; because you haven't. I am not so easily humbugged. If it were not so late at night, you should not stay another hour in my house. As it is, I shall order a carriage to be here for you at eight o'clock to-morrow morning, and you must be ready for it, boxes and all. The best thing you

can do is to go to Paris, and pursue your métier there, *Madame Osborne;*" and then, with a sort of laugh, he turned towards his wife, and said, "Now, let me have some supper, Frau!"

Seeing the photograph still lying on the table where he had flung it down, he took it up, tore it into a dozen pieces, and pitched the pieces on to the hearth.

"I wish you good-night," said Madame Höffner, gravely and sadly, and in English; "I shall not see you again."

She knew that would not be permitted.

"Good-night, madame, and thank you for your goodness to me," returned poor Nora, almost unconsciously holding out her hand.

"You need not give your hand to madame," put in Höffner roughly; "my wife does not shake hands with such as you. You may just mount the stairs, madame, and go to your room; and you need not come out of it till I send you word to-morrow morning."

Nora went. A little time afterwards, when she heard the cook come upstairs, she asked her to help in bringing her boxes

out of the "grenier" into her room. The cook, who had heard most, if not all, that had been said in the dining-room, through the "passe-plat" between the kitchen and the office, looked curiously, and, as Nora thought, with a somewhat free and impudent expression, into her face; but after the boxes were brought in she stood for a minute in the doorway, one arm leaning against the door-post, and one hand on her stout hip, and said, not unkindly (there is no kinder or more willing race of servants in the world than the French "bonnes," though they have their faults like all others of their class),

"That's a great brute, madame, that fellow! I would not care a sou for his injures! D'abord, he has been always so very virtuous himself, sans doute! Bah! he makes me ill. Everybody in the village calls him 'Le fou Höffner.'"

Nora did not reply. The woman still continued to stand in the doorway, regarding her with a mixture of curiosity and compassion—

"Mon Dieu! je serais joliment aise de m'en aller, madame, si j'étais vous," she

went on at last, "et de finir avec ces détestables enfants!"

Nora got her out of the room at last—not, however, before the good-natured woman had offered to go down and get her wine, or some bread or meat, if she felt faint. Would she not feel faint before she had finished her packing? And, though Sophie was answered in the negative, she went down slipperless some three minutes afterwards, huddled some food and a bottle of wine (the wine being what was given out for the kitchen use) under her apron, and appeared thus laden at Nora's door.

"Here, madame," she whispered, "you will be hungry before you have finished. Take it in—take it in—and get some rest if you can. Mariette and I will come in in the morning, and cord your boxes for you."

"Thank you, Sophie, for being so good to me."

"Ce n'est rien; ce n'est rien," said the poor bonne; "ça me fait mal de vous voir si chagrinée, Madame Anna. Mais enfin!" and with that she moved away to her own bed.

About midnight the packing was finished,

and Nora laid herself, faint and exhausted, upon her bed. Then she remembered the food Sophie had brought her, and she sat up, and ate and drank; and after that, laying herself down again, fell asleep. She was wakened in the morning by the cook coming into her room, and to her bedside, and telling her she must get up quickly; it was nearly seven o'clock. She rose, feeling as if some great blow had been struck her before she slept last night, and as if she was still stunned and in pain from it. The good-natured Sophie laboured up the stairs with her breakfast of café-aux-glands and bread; also a fried egg and some potatoes; which she begged her to eat, as she sat panting on one of the chairs in Nora's room after the exertion of coming up so far.

"Mangez, mangez, madame," she said; "cela vous donnera un peu de courage, and drink that coffee; it is nice and hot, with plenty of sugar."

While Nora eat as well as she could, the woman said with a sigh,

"Mon Dieu, j'avais un ami une fois, moi! —mais il y a vingt ans. C'est que les hommes donnent beaucoup de peine, madame, n'est-ce pas?"

Nora almost choked over her coffee,—and felt as if she had never known degradation till that moment. How low was she to fall ?—where was her disgrace to end ?

At eight o'clock, the "fiacre" that was to take her to X—— was announced at her door—by the femme de chambre. Her boxes were taken downstairs by the gardener, and Nora followed them. She passed through the house without seeing anyone. The children were all safely shut into the salle-à-manger with their parents ; but they looked out of the windows at her, as she walked along the gravel drive towards the gates.

The two poor bonnes, who would soon be chased from the same house with perhaps little less than the same contumely, wished her good-bye ; and then stood looking after the departing fiacre, till it was lost in the turn of the road.

"Mon Dieu ! mais c'est un drôle de monde," exclaimed the cuisinière, as she hurried back to the house.

"Ah, ma fai, oui !" said the little femme de chambre ; "and now let us get our soup. J'ai déjà un faim de loup !"

CHAPTER II.

In an upper room of a house in the Rue St. Honoré, Paris, a painter sat at his easel, working at the almost nude form of a beautiful woman, just stepping into a marble bath. He was a good-looking fellow; with dark hair, beard, and moustache; brown eyes, and a strong, well-knit frame; of about middle height. He worked rapidly, and as it seemed, almost carelessly with his brush; humming the whole time, and in very bad tune, an air from one of the last operas.

"Will monsieur have dinner now?" inquired a middle-aged woman, dressed in a black gown, and spotless white cap and apron, looking in at the door.

"No, Christine; I will wait half an hour longer."

"The dinner will be spoilt, monsieur."

"Oh, well, n'importe. Don't worry me about it. There ;—there he is !" exclaimed the painter a few moments after, flinging down his brush. He rushed out of his studio, and wringing the hand of some gentleman who had just been pulling the bell of his apartment, ushered his visitor through a rather dark entry and an "office :" then, as they both emerged into a tiny square dining parlour, hung with tapestry, and crammed with old furniture, and where a table was set for two shook both hands again, saying in hearty English,

"Well, and how are you, mon vieux garçon ? Diable !—you look better than you did ! Are you ready for dinner ? I am."

"And I too. I have had nothing all day. Where are all your pictures, Anastase ?"

"Oh, I've hung this up for a change. When fellows came to dine, we quarrelled about the colouring and so on ; and it didn't improve digestion. Besides, I was afraid of the worsted work getting moth-eaten. But it will soon have to come down. It's too hot. Now then, tell us all about your-

self," he continued; seating himself on a low chair, and leaning forward with his arms on his knees; his brown eyes looking kindly and with interest on his friend.

The "friend," with one arm resting on the tapestry-covered board of the mantelpiece, and the other thrust into his pocket, made answer by observing,

"You're the same as ever, St. Clair. It's as good as seeing an Englishman seeing you. What a pity it is all you Frenchmen can't have the advantage of being brought up at Harrow!"

"You want me to begin by knocking you over, do you?"

"Not till I've had some dinner," returned the other laughing; "when we've had dinner, we shall begin quarrelling as usual, of course! Ah, that's right, here's the soup! Well, Christine, et comment cela va-t-il?" he inquired of St. Clair's housekeeper, cook, and waitress, guardian in general.

"Bien, je vous remercie, monsieur. Et comment monsieur se trouve-t-il?"

"Thanks, all right; and quite ready to do justice to your dinner. Potage d'ange!

Have you remembered all this time that I liked your potage d'ange, Christine ?"

"Mais je crois bien, monsieur."

"Extravagante !" growled St. Clair, turning round with a smile, "et combien d'œufs avez vous mis dedans ?"

"Never mind, monsieur, I have not ruined monsieur. I am running away now to look after my fowls," and Christine left the room.

When one of the gentlemen had arrived at his second mutton cutlet, and the other at his third, and nearly a bottle of wine had disappeared between the two, they began to feel sufficiently restored for further conversation.

"What are your plans, dis-donc ?" inquired the Frenchman, "or have you formed any ? How long are you going to stay in Paris ?"

"I don't know. As long as you're pleasant, and as long as things go on right at home."

"Do you leave a good manager there ?"

"Yes ; a first rate man, whom I can entirely trust ; and then my agent looks after everything."

"Have you left your mother alone?"

"No, my mother has gone on a long visit to her sister's in London. A little variety and London life will do her good."

"The sister is accommodating, ma foi! What eternal long visits you English do endure from each other!"

"I am going home for the shooting in September. In July, my mother is going to Scotland, and August she is to spend at Hallingford; so Lady Belton will only have to endure her for two months. The bread, please, St. Clair. She will have her own room and her own maid, and her own carriage you see, and Lady Belton wouldn't hear of her going to an hotel."

"Just what I said," remarked St. Clair, "the houses of you English are like hotels. It's all very fine talking of your domestic life, and the 'family circle,' and all that; why, you have always a pack of your relations swarming about your heels. Your houses are never your own."

"We have more room for our 'packs of relations,'" returned Rochefort, "in our 'hotels of houses,' than you have in your little French flats. If you ask your mother

to come and see you for a week, you have to sleep on the sofa in the 'salon,' till she's gone !"

"Anything more ?" asked St. Clair, laying hold of the bread-knife. "Be respectful, mon vieux."

"Yes ; we'd better be 'sages' the first evening we see each other, if we never are again. This is first-rate cheese, St. Clair."

"Yes ; Neufchâtel, as you perceive. . . . Well," (after five minutes devoted to the cheese, and to further talk), "will you have a cigar, and come out into the garden ?"

After the two men had walked and conversed about half an hour together, St. Clair, taking his cigar for a moment out of his mouth, and knocking off the ashes, said,

"If it's not an indiscreet question, Longley, and if you don't mind my asking it—do you ever hear anything of your wife now ?"

"I do not know where she is," answered Rochefort, after a pause of several moments. "I am told she does not wish it to be known, or does not wish me to know."

"Do you know what she is doing ?"

"To a certain extent, I do. No more."

"Who do you hear from?"

"From a friend of mine."

"Dis donc, Longley," recommenced St. Clair, after they had walked a little way in silence, "what are you going to do about her?"

"I can't tell you."

"Do you think she had really loved this fellow?" asked his friend.

"Yes; for a long time. I know she had. Don't make me talk about it, for Heaven's sake!"

"Do you think I want you to talk about it? Do I want to see you looking like the ghost you did, when you were here last year? But look here, Longley; why don't you get divorced?"

"Because she is not living with him."

"Eh bien! après?" said St. Clair.

Rochefort moved along without speaking.

"You have no child, have you?" inquired his friend.

"No."

"Isn't that rather a serious matter?"

"Yes, very serious to me."

"Who's the next heir?"

"My cousin, the Earl of Hallingford."

"Why, that fellow was the talk of Paris a little time ago. His 'Ninon' used to drive a pair of splendid bays, and had magnificent receptions that cost him a fortune. She had a box at the opera, and I have seen him with her there."

"I don't doubt it. Well, that is my heir."

"But what utter nonsense it is, Longley, to talk of his being your heir, at your age! There is nothing to prevent your marrying again, and having a dozen children of your own."

"Nothing, but my own dread of marrying again."

"That's a merely morbid dread. No woman would treat you again as she has done."

"Besides, St. Clair, my wife is not living with the man now. Can't you feel how that mere fact makes it more difficult for me to decree that I shall never more be anything to her, or she anything to me? My right of separating myself from her is half taken away from me."

"You would not feel that if you loved another woman," said the artist. There

was no answer, and the two walked on for some minutes without speaking.

"Let us go in, and look at some pictures," said Rochefort at last, abruptly; "what are you doing now?" They went up together to St. Clair's studio. When the latter had arranged lights so as to show off his easel-picture to advantage, Rochefort seated himself on the painter's stool, and leaning forward, looked for some time without speaking, and with rather a dry, cool, critical air, at the beautiful woman's figure before him.

"Why do you French artists go in so endlessly for this style of thing?" he asked, presently: "this is very gracefully and well done; but why don't you strike out something else?"

"It takes, and it sells," answered St. Clair, carelessly, as he stood behind his friend's back, and looked on.

"But have you no ambition to improve the popular taste?" inquired Longley, looking up at him a little satirically. "I wouldn't paint a picture of this sort, for the very reason that it takes, and that it sells."

"Wouldn't you?" retorted the artist, "if

you had to earn your soup, and your bed, by your pictures! And as for reforming the popular taste, don't come to me talking such gammon! You know it's all gammon."

"Yes, I believe it is, in France," returned the Englishman.

"Isn't it in England?" demanded the artist, with some heat.

"No," said Rochefort, as he rose and turned away from the picture; "go into almost any exhibition of paintings you like in France, and it is a chance that you are not sated from when you go in till when you come out, by these masses of flesh. It is the exception in England, that a man exhibits this style of drawing 'd'après nature.'"

"D'après nature!" repeated St. Clair, with a sort of mocking irony in his voice, "and what is there ever wrong—dis-moi donc, mon saint—en dessinant d'après nature? We French are frank in all we say, and feel, and print, and paint; you English are reserved, that is all the difference."

"Very well; then let us have the re-

serve," replied Rochefort, coolly, "I prefer it for myself."

"I know you do. You are as cold and rigid as a piece of rock. The representation of a 'femme divine' like that does not stir a pulse in you."

"How do you know?"

"Know? By the way you look, and the way you speak. . . . . I am going to have four thousand francs for that picture, Longley. Tu vois que je deviens fameux!"

"Who from?"

"A rich merchant who lives in the Faubourg. He ordered it. I have only been going on with it when I could. I had my 'salon' picture to attend to."

"Did you choose the subject then, or did he?"

"He sent me the subject," answered the artist.

After a minute or two, during which time St. Clair had added a few further particulars relative to the "subject" in question, Rochefort asked,

"What was your exhibition picture?"

"Same sort of thing," answered St. Clair.

"Are not you tired of the work?" inquired

his friend with a sort of impatience in his voice.

"Yes, rather for the present; and my next picture is going to be that of a noble lady—time of the Reign of Terror—hearing that her husband has just been guillotined! Is that depressing enough for you?"

* * * *

In a locked case, in a locked trunk, in one of Rochefort's rooms at the Louvre, there were lying straight and silent, a number of loose leaves, of different sized paper, written on in different inks, in different moods, and at different times; but all bearing reference to one subject, and that subject, one that was rending almost to death, the heart of the writer. The writer never looked upon them now, it would have been to him like the re-opening of a grave; but we who have never yet made that grave, or laid therein the body that would never more breathe with life, or flush with warmth, for him who had buried it, will seek those papers, unfold them, learn something from them, of the agony that had been endured, that had exhausted itself, and that had passed away!

September, Interlachen.—I remember saying to poor Grey once—the first time I ever saw him, and that seems as if it was in another life, gone far back from this—that I hoped I had many years before me to live. Perhaps I have; for I have come out of the jaws of death, and yet am well, and almost strong again, and not much changed. But what am I to do with my life? I feel as if I had lost the helm, and had no strength to guide the vessel any more.

I often wonder—wonder for hours together—what terrible mistake I made, that I should have brought such wretchedness on myself. Every one speaks as if it were all *her* fault; every one commiserates me; no one has a word of pity or of tolerance for her! And I do not know myself how far she is to be pitied; I do not know how far she deliberately deceived me, or to what extent she was tempted. I have no knowledge of how much she loved—or of how little she loved me! And yet I ought to know that; yes, *I do know it*, with bitter certainty of knowledge! * * *

I had found out, long before, that she

was not what I thought her; but was it *my* fault or *hers*, that I idealized her?—that I clothed her with every feeling and aspiration of my own heart—that I listened to my passion, telling me her nature was made for mine, and mine only—that I crowned and sceptred her with my own hand, and then fell on my knees before her? Was it her fault that she *could* not be my friend, my angel, my queen? Did I not want from her what perhaps no woman can give? * * *

I distract myself continually with the thought—how far is she sinning *wilfully—willingly?* How much does she love the man who could teach her what *I* could not? Is it possible—what insufferable torture there is in the thought!—that all the time I had her as my wife—as part of myself—when her head lay on my breast—when my kisses were on her lips—when I thought she was mine, and mine only, that her affection—or what seemed her affection—was a counterfeited thing; and that if she could have done it, she would have given it to him?

* * * *

December, Algiers.—Lady Hallingford has written to me—such a tender, brave, beautiful letter. She hopes I shall come home in the spring; she wants me to think of going into Parliament: she says—"There are so many who love you still. Don't stay away till you have forgotten how many. Life is not all over for you, yet—nor half over. My own dear lad, write to your old aunt, whose heart is oftener with you than you think, and who prays God to bless, and keep, and comfort you." I cried over the letter, till I could cry no more. . . . . I answered it, and I told her that, God helping me, I will be true to my duty and my sense of right, yet. . . . But I seem to be only stumbling amidst clouds and stifling darkness, which grow almost deeper as the months wear on; and I can see light to guide me nowhere. And if I did, what am I to do with myself, with the *life of my heart*, while I am shaping out this course of mere duty—of mere work? . . . Sometimes the thought that another man is possessing what is *mine*, solely and entirely *mine*, sends me almost mad. I wish that there were a "Lethe" anywhere upon

earth, that I might travel to it, and take one draught, and be released from this one torturing idea. I could bear the pain of my own loneliness, if I were not maddened by the knowledge which pursues me wherever I go, that she . . . . My God! it is too horrible! Does she know *anything* of what she is making me suffer? Does she know how I try to shut my eyes, to deafen my ears, to drug my brain, to stifle my imagination, that I may not picture her in his arms?—hear what he says to her?—see his lips on hers?—and I *cannot* do it; in my very dreams I see them! Merciful God! if it be possible, let *this* cup pass from me, *for I cannot bear its bitterness!* It has been given me; and I have drunk it; emptied it again and again to its sickening dregs; how can I bear it for ever refilled, and for ever at my lips?

* * * *

January.—The evenings when I am alone are so insufferably lonely! I reproach myself that they are so; I ought to have more purpose, more self-control; but I have none yet. I can only read a few pages at a time. I have been reading a

French book just now, and ended when I came to the last words of the chapter, which were—"Nous finirons avec tout cela, dans l'autre monde." There has always seemed to me something inexpressibly sad in that expression "l'autre monde." It is characteristic of us, that we say "the next," and of the French, that they say "the *other*" world. Our expression is the best, and seems to point to the idea of some sort of preparation in this life for the following; but theirs echoes on one's ear like the voice of some wearied spirit; it has no sound of hope, of promise, of fulfilled desire in it; only a sound of satiety, and of fatigue—"the *other* world!" A world which will at least be different from this; a world in which the faults and sufferings that have been our bane here, will be at least *changed*.

* * * *

March, Athens.—Sometimes I have a wild impulse to bear my solitude no longer. Why should I? why *must I?* If I were cold-hearted, and always cool-headed, I suppose I should not have the sudden and desperate thoughts that seize me at times. I should bear my sufferings and my isolation

with stoicism ; or rather I should not suffer, should not feel isolated as I do. * * * * * I have been out of the city for several days ; and last night by moonlight, and from a rock, I saw a storm. It was gloriously—awfully beautiful ! and it has stirred every pulse within me, and made my heart beat as if something of the old life and the old passion for life were coming back to me. A tranquil, glassy sea is no pleasure to me, but a sea in tumult, rising in great roaring walls of water, which reel and break, and dash themselves to death, in an avalanche of white foam ; a sea which struggles and wrestles with a wind as mighty as itself, is the grandest—the greatest sight on earth ! Its thunders are like those of some divine organ. It is rare that any music struck by a human hand gives one calm or force ; it nourishes rather the thoughts, the desires, and the regrets which cause pain ; but the magnificent and stormy music of God elevates and fortifies —it does not pain !"

* * * *

June, St. Petersburg.—I have been away from England nearly a year. In August I

am going home till the spring. The house is to be full nearly all the time; it would perhaps be impossible to endure it otherwise. I am beginning to long to see the old place again. My heart throbs at the thought of the green grass, and the great trees, and the smell of the moss and the wild flowers on the hill; the thick woods, and the deep overshadowed river—all mine still! Lady Hallingford has written to me again—the sort of letter that sets one's pulses beating as if one heard martial music. There are moments now when instead of feeling as if my life were ended, I feel as if it had yet to begin. Is it right to feel so? I do not know; I know only that, alternating with hours of gloom, of doubt, of depression, come now and then hours when a glorious sun strikes warm upon my heart; and when it seems to me that "old things are passed away," and "all things have become new." * * *

Paris, April.—I am here for some time; and have found out my old friend Anastase St. Clair, who is getting on pretty well as a painter. He has moved from his old place near the Luxembourg, where we (ah me!

we) saw him last; and has his studio and lodging in the Rue St. Honoré. We see each other constantly, and often have supper together in the Palais-Royal, after the theatre or walking out. His uncle, who brought him up, and with whom he lived so many years at Harrow, before coming over here to study, is dead, and his aunt has come to live in Paris, to be near him. He is a good fellow, and yesterday I went with him to Père la Chaise, where he took flowers to put on his mother's grave. "Chère petite mère, adieu!" he said as we came away, and he kissed his hand lightly towards the spot where she lay. He has laid flowers there, on the anniversary of her death (whenever it has found him in Paris), for thirteen years. I asked him why he had never come to see me in England, as he says he has been often backwards and forwards—sometimes to get subjects for painting. He said, "Would you have cared to see me?" and added, "It was well enough to be friends at Harrow, and spend half-holidays together, and all that; but I didn't suppose you would care to see a poor painter turn up in spoiled clothes, and with uncut hair and beard, and carry-

ing a worn old bag, at Riverswood." His uncle has always made him an allowance, he said, or else he could not have lived, and must have taken to business of some kind, which he hates. When Mr. H—— died, he left Anastase five hundred pounds; and he bought straight away all the old furniture and so on there is in his little dining-room; went into other extravagancies, and had not a franc left at the end of a year, to take him to Italy, where he had meant to spend the whole of it. He can't go now till his aunt dies, when he will have all she has; but I think, from the looks of his aunt, she is likely to live for twenty years yet. He says he hopes she will; he is very kind to, and fond of her.

I always liked St. Clair, though we agree in nothing. Now he, or his interests, or his company, or "l'air de Paris," as he says, seems to be giving me some of my youth back.

* * * *

September, Riverswood.—Sidney Glanville, when he wrote to me some time ago, told me that poor Nora—that my wife—had written to tell his brother that she was

"provided for." She said no more, and gave no address, and she did not wish to hear from him again. How is she provided for, and where? I am ignorant. I do not try to find out, even if there would be any use in doing so. I do not hear of her any more than if she were dead. My heart has been so lacerated, it has healed so slowly, it is so miserably tender to touch, that the mere thought of any circumstances bringing me even into indirect relation with her, causes me a pain and dread which I cannot control. I go out into the fields. I order my horse —I inflict myself on my friends—I do anything rather than stay alone, if I feel the grasp of a certain thought about my heart. It is the thought that was once heaven to me, and I feel like a savage—like a brute, when I confess to myself, that it now seems to bring prison air about me—seems to close me round with prison walls! It is the thought that she belongs to me, and I to her, and that I have not yet stirred a step, or moved a finger, to free myself from the bondage which must evermore be bondage to me, because it is to her; because I have been and am still a hated chain about

her neck and feet; because we have no part in each other, and never can have now.

The other day, when I was in Gowerford, I went for half-an-hour into the Cathedral, where they were chanting the afternoon service. I felt, I don't know why, unutterably depressed and sad; and I turned into the church, as a refuge from the streets, and from the "greetings in the market-place." The anthem began a few minutes after I went in.—No words can give any idea of the marvellous rendering of these words, "And in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert!" All the voices clashed together in one wonderful accord of sounds, bursting out as from a fountain-head, and then rushing forth, as like streams coming from a rock, as music can be like water! At the end of all, came—"They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." It came upon me like a prophecy; . . . but is it one? No description is possible of the slow, tender, solemn beauty of the almost divine music. One voice followed another like an echo. As each note died away, it was taken up again—and again—and again; the words,

"And sorrow and sighing shall flee away" being dwelt on with lengthened and unspeakable pathos! I could have sat on for hours, feeling no hunger, or thirst, or weariness; but it was too soon over.

As I went out, two ladies passed me; one walked on, the other came up to me, and spoke, and put her hand into mine. I noticed she had tears in her eyes, and her hand trembled as I held it. Mine trembled too. I think we said a few words to each other, but I don't know what they were, and then we parted. It was Lizzy Heaton. I had not seen her since Nora left me. I think, from the look in her face, that she would be kind and forgiving—if kindness and forgiveness were wanted. * *

One day, after I had had Sidney Glanville's letter, I rode over to Gowerford, and saw old Heaton, and made him promise that if he heard from the family that Nora was in any difficulty or distress—the poor child writes home, it appears, sometimes—he would let me know at once, that I might send her anything she wanted through him. He gave me his promise, but I have not heard from him since. He said she was

"supporting herself honestly," but that was all he was authorized to tell me, if I asked. * * * And now I shall write no more. What my future is to be God only knows. The past is too dark and terrible to dwell on more. I must try to bury it, as I shall hide this handful of papers out of sight. Has it done any good to write them? I do not know, but I think sometimes my heart would have burst if I had let nothing out. In looking over a few of the pages (for the last time), I see how egotistical, how sad, how self-absorbed, all that is written on them is. And what is worse, I feel as if I had gained nothing by my suffering. I am no better, no stronger; I am only less believing and less hopeful. Every one tells me I am wrong in not freeing myself from ties that have no weight or worth for me now. I confess it,—they have no weight or worth. The time was when I would have taken her to my breast, if she had come to me; but I could not do that now. My heart had its death-blow on that awful night . . . . but it has been long in dying. I believe it is the dead weight of my dead heart which is

sapping all life and strength from me. . . . . How absolutely useless it is to write and to feel like this! And worse than useless. . . .

Will she ever want, herself, to come back to me? Will she ever need my protection? It is the thought that she may which is the real root of my reluctance to sever the bond which gives her the right to do it. How can I make it impossible for my wife to come to me, if she cares to come? That she will never care, that she has shown me my love is a worthless thing to her, is the hardest of my griefs, or has been the hardest; but in spite of my knowing that, I feel as if I should be a brute to give her the freedom she is perhaps longing for. . . .

And any day I may die, and this is all I have known of life! I dare not sound my heart to find what power of passion is left there. Sometimes I think there is a fiercer power than has ever risen yet. How do people feel who are resigned to sorrow? What on earth *is* resignation? How can one be resigned, before one reaches heaven? It seems to me, people might as well talk to

you about not feeling pain, while the surgeon's knife is pressing on your nerves and flesh. * * I have been to see Lady Hallingford, and we talked for hours together. She has told me what she wants me to do. It is what everybody tells me I should do; but I cannot! . . . . If I only knew certainly that she wished to be freed from me! I could know if I chose; but I shrink from the misery and shock of hearing from her own lips that my wife has never loved me.

* * * *

CHAPTER III.

An Englishman and a Frenchman, if they feel that there exists a sufficiently strong friendship between them to stand a few shocks and thrusts, but more especially if each knows enough of the other's nation to make the combat interesting, and to put pretty sharp weapons into the hands of each, are sure to "tilt" more or less seriously, unless both register a vow in their hearts not to be drawn into the engagement under any inducement or temptation whatever. With an Englishman and a German the case is different; there is less natural antagonism of sentiment, temperament, and "croyance." The Saxon element is strong in both, and the blood is toned to something like the same heat and quality. An Englishman and a Frenchman may be warm

friends, and warm allies—and may they be so to the end of time!—but they are different beings all the same.

One evening, two gentlemen walked leisurely along the lighted boulevards of Paris, and talked as they walked.

"I gave you all your own way last night, Longley," began one of them; "but—— by-the-bye," he said, suddenly interrupting himself, "I've intended to ask you a question a hundred times, and I'll ask it while I think of it. Why are you called 'Rochefort?' It seems to me the same as if I were called 'Portsmouth' or 'Plymouth.' You weren't given the name to commemorate the bright-starred expedition of your nation against 'Rochefort' about a hundred years ago, when you suceeeded so admirably, were you?"

Rochefort laughed. "No, it was the family name of my mother's mother. She was of French extraction. Did I never tell you?"

"If she was, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, for not being more of a Frenchman than you are. You ought to have a natural affinity towards us."

"It would do some Englishmen good, if they had more affinity to you in some ways," returned his friend.

"Good heavens, what are we coming to?" exclaimed St. Clair, in astonishment. "Is the man raving? Merci bien, however; but in what way, may one ask?"

"Don't raise your hopes, my dear fellow, or they'll be cruelly disappointed. I've only been reading the English papers, and going through a column or two of police cases, and I am reminded of the fact that your working men in France do not, as a rule, make brutes of themselves with drink, as ours do."

"And yet you were talking such a lot last night about our immorality?"

"Well, in the first place, we were on one especial subject, and we did not move a step off it on either side. And in the second, we were talking only of the upper and middle classes, and I am thinking now of the lower. I don't withdraw a word of what I said to you last night; I could have said a great deal more, that's all."

"What about?"

"We were very nearly on the delightful

topic of your 'collèges' and 'Lycées.' Should you like us to get on it? Doesn't the subject make you flinch? It has that effect upon me. I would rather keep my hands and my brain clear from it—and so would you. You want a new 'Evangile' written on the subject, and circulated from north to south, and from east to west."

"Thanks. Of course there never was anything wrong at Harrow, was there? The boys were all saints, that were not already cherubs, were not they?"

"Harrow?" repeated Rochefort, with a suddenly flushed face; "who would not back Harrow at its worst, against one of your French Lycées at its best, and come off triumphant every way? You know you daren't compare any French school with Harrow for a moment, there's no possibility of doing it. But don't let us talk of the schools. How can you be 'patriotic,' St. Clair, and yet true—as you ought to be true—to Harrow at the same time?"

"No, let us leave the subject by all means," said St. Clair; "we were talking of the superiority of our poorer classes to yours;—and let me tell you, Longley, while

it occurs to me, that I consider the awful viciousness of your lower classes in England —especially of course in the large towns— to be the foulest blot on the face of the earth."

"We all know it, or ought to know it," returned Longley. "It is enough to make a man believe that the devil is Lord of all, to walk through some parts of London. One shudders at the rags, the dirt, the wretchedness, the horrible vice. Sometimes I feel that I could give my life easily, if it could only help to redeem England from the burden of her worst curse."

"What curse—among all the curses—are you speaking of?" asked his friend.

"Of the one that is at the bottom of all our crime and miserable poverty — the curse of 'drinking.' You French," he continued, presently, "have at least this advantage over us, St. Clair, that you know how to sin with much more outward decency —with infinitely less loathsomeness and hideousness, than we. Sin makes beasts of us; in France you have almost reduced it to a refined art; it does not offend you in every street, and at every turn, as it

often does us,—it is an awful—an insidious —a fearful reptile among you—but it is not such a loathsome one as with us."

"And yet you rank your nation, which carries such a cancer as this drunkenness, in its bosom, higher than ours, which is not diseased to one half, perhaps not to one quarter, the extent?"

"Not of that particular plague," answered Rochefort, briefly. "But of a worse one," he went on, "it is diseased incalculably deeper; and that is a disease which affects you nationally, as drinking has never, and can never, affect us nationally. It is deteriorating you, as 'absinthe' deteriorates gradually the whole of a man's 'morale' and constitution. You'll come near balancing our beer and spirit-drinking, by-the-bye, Anastase, with your 'absinthe' in the course of time, if you go on as fast as you're doing now."

"I believe," said St. Clair, "that you imagine us to be going to the devil altogether, and at express speed; so it matters very little what takes us there, or lands us there quickest."

"Yes,—I believe you are," answered Longley, coolly.

"You are as polite as usual, of course," returned his friend; "and what does that mean?"

"More than I can tell you in five minutes, and more than you would care to hear. But I have my own opinions regarding the tranquil delights in store for France, during the next ten or twenty years, as the case may be. One can predict nothing positively. But you are seeing now 'through a glass darkly,' Anastase."

The two walked on together for a little way in silence. Rochefort was the first to speak again.

"Do you think, parbleu, that the nation has a constitution for anything?" he demanded suddenly, and turning his face on his friend as he spoke; "do you never imagine that it may be a wreck before the term of its natural life has come? How long will it take in wasting? It has been a fine one, to last as it has."

"And it is a constitution that is good for a great deal yet," answered the Frenchman, "trust me, mon vieux!"

"Amen," returned Rochefort, "I am quite willing. I tell you, St. Clair," he

went on, as he threw away the end of the cigar he had been smoking, "it is a constitution that was meant to be one of the finest upon earth. Look at the amount of intelligence, refinement, love of art, and fineness of tact and perception that you have among you. Compare your artisan and peasant class with ours—yours ranks the highest in civilization and intelligence, if not in actual education. Of course one cannot draw absolute lines. We are more civilized in some things, you in others. For instance, one goes to a French inn, a few miles from one of your largest towns, and one gets, as a favour, a small salad-bowl to wash one's hands in; and one goes out to buy one's own water-jug, which will hold a pint and a half; and if the floors happen to be wood they are never washed from one year's end to the other. In England you find everywhere a proper wash-stand and dressing-table; but then, how about the cooking? For myself, I had rather have the cooking, and put up with the salad-bowl, if it's only for a few days."

St. Clair laughed. "Yes, but it's not pleasant for long. I've tried that sort of thing very often, you see."

"And have you felt you would endure diurnal chops and steaks with no sauce, and bad gravy, and always cooked in the same way, for the sake of having a wash-stand and a dusty carpet?" asked the Englishman.

"Almost, though I shouldn't have liked it when the change came, I dare say. You see, I got naturalized to English comforts when I was in England. But I have dined at Scotch and Irish and Welsh inns, at the table d'hôtes, Arthur, and had splendid dinners. You Britons can cook well enough when you give yourselves the trouble; but you won't always do it. There is a good deal of the Spartan element about you, after all."

After a pause of some minutes, Rochefort went on, àpropos of nothing:

"You ought to be a grand nation, you know, St. Clair; but you're not. One thing that would help you to it would be, a thoroughly good government—if only you would ever allow yourselves to be well-governed by anybody—to last a hundred years. You were oppressed and deceived by a succession of selfish, and extravagant,

and wicked intrigants and intrigantes, till you were mad with fury and misery; and then the rebels at your head soaked France in its own best blood from north to south, because with the best they destroyed some of the worst. And instead of that horrid massacre and establishment of a 'Republic' purifying and strengthening the nation—as it was intended to do, and as it ought to have done—you have been surging in restlessness and revolt ever since."

"It only shows, then," continued Anastase, "what a lot there is in us, somehow and somewhere, that, at the end of all, we can show to Europe such a country and such a capital, and, after all is said, such a people as we do!"

And then, having walked till it was somewhat late, they turned into a restaurant for supper. Let us say a word here for French cookery and French eating-houses.

Will English restaurants ever be managed—if England exists some hundreds, or shall we say thousands, of years longer—in the way "they manage these things in France?" We will suppose that you saunter out of your hotel some morning in a French town:

you find yourself hungry after you have looked at churches and bridges till twelve o'clock, and you turn into the first restaurant or café you see—a good one, and in a good street; but nothing splendid, nothing in the least aristocratic or expensive. After waiting a very short time (in a pretty room in an entresol it may be), you are served, let us say, with oysters; then with a fowl, cut up with soufflées d'œufs, and pain grillé. To this is added a cauliflower, not "boiled as if for pigs," but neatly divided, and arranged on a dish; browned, buttered, bread-crumbed, and covered with a delicious "sauce au fromage." Then follow "des cotelettes" and potatoes "frités à l'huile." Lastly, a cream cheese, or a fresh cheese of Neufchâtel, pears, grapes, and macaroons. Fancy a man going into a restaurant in Manchester or Liverpool, ordering lunch, and before he had time to wish it would come, being served thus, and at no great expense either! You stop at a little inn among the mountains, where soap (we must say it) would appear to be a commodity rarely, if ever, attainable, and where the rude staircase is black and rickety; but

where the good wife of the "aubergiste" will cook you exquisite little "plats" of veal, or beef, or fowl, with "trimmings," such as are unknown to our English landladies; make you a soup in a quarter of an hour; present you with little cream cheeses, of a sort and of a flavour fit for the goddesses, and sprinkled with fine white sugar; a melon; fruit à discretion; even finger biscuits, and a "plat sucré," if you like. Or if you want a change, she will toss you up beautiful-looking puffs made of potato, fish, eggs, and what not; or give you a "salade de pommes de terre," the like of which you will never see again from the hour you set foot in Dover or Folkestone; or show you that young cabbages, cut up and fried with butter and pepper, and so on, and decorated with frizzling chestnuts, are a dish of which you can scarcely have enough! And then the various preparations of maccaroni! Why does not some enterprising individual set up a stall in Cheapside, or the Strand, or Ludgate Hill, and teach his fellow-barbarians how to cook maccaroni, in such a way that a good dinner can be made of it, after having first gone over the Channel to learn himself?

But we learn very slowly in the matter of cooking, and as a rule, not more than we can help. How many Englishmen (we speak now of those who do not keep cooks at eighteen or twenty pounds a year, and whose wives will not look after the cooking and teach their maids themselves, either from their own sense or Mrs. Beeton), how many Englishmen come over year after year from the Continent, and sit down the first day after they arrive, to their half-raw leg of mutton with watery gravy, their watery boiled potatoes, and the eternal cauliflower with melted butter, experiencing a feeling of chill, of disgust, and of depression, which words are inadequate to describe?

CHAPTER IV.

One evening, M. Anastase St. Clair, dressed as if for a party, but with a light grey coat loosely donned, so as to conceal the fact as much as might be, made his way in a leisurely manner from the Rue St. Honoré to the Grand Hôtel du Louvre, where his English friend was staying.

When he entered the large and handsome "salon au deuxième," which Mr. Longley occupied for the time being, he found that gentleman almost at full length on his canapé, the *Times* in his hands, and a cigar in his mouth.

"Where are you going?" asked Rochefort, putting down his paper, and turning his eyes on his friend.

"To a reception, or rather, perhaps—a

ball—and I have come to ask you to go with me."

"Whose reception is it?"

"Mademoiselle A——'s."

"And who is Mademoiselle A——?"

"She was 'Madame la Comtesse de Hallingford' last spring," answered St. Clair; "she is 'Madame la Comtesse de X——' at present; to speak plainly, mon cher, she is 'Hélène.'"

"Oh, I see," answered Rochefort, returning to his paper; "and what gives you the entrée to Mademoiselle A——'s salons?"

"Oh, we were very good friends years ago," answered St. Clair, colouring a little; "before she was known. She is the fashion now, and shining in a heaven far above me. But she retains a great deal of bonté for me; she has a good heart and a good memory. I often paint for her, or paint for others through her, and she has an angelic taste. She has some of my prettiest things."

"Eh bien! Allez-vous-en," was all Rochefort said.

"But I want you to come with me."

"Seriously?"

"Yes, seriously. I can take anyone I like, and if you want to see all the 'great ones of the earth,' princes, and ministers, and so on, now's your time."

"I'm not dressed."

"I will wait for you. I have come in good time on purpose."

Rochefort threw down his paper, lifted himself up from his ottoman, and saying,

"Well, there's plenty of reading for you, if you're going to wait," rang for his valet, and went off into the next room to dress.

* * * *

After watching one of the dances, to which a large room, almost panelled with mirrors, exquisitely adorned with flowers, and brilliant with light reflected from a thousand crystals, was given up, Rochefort, who was leaning inside a doorway, communicating with another and a smaller room —a picture-room—asked his friend,

"Who is M. le Comte de X——?"

"Do you see that little man, talking to a pretty girl in white lace and May-blossom? —No, not that way—turn your head—off there, close to where M. B—— and the Prince de C—— are gesticulating, (they are on politics); now, do you see him?"

"A frightfully ugly little fellow; grey haired, and rather fat?"

"Yes; that is the Comte de X——."

"My God!" uttered Rochefort, after fixing his eyes on the Count for two minutes. St. Clair laughed.

"He's not frightfully ugly, Arthur. You exaggerate. I've seen many uglier men in England, if not in Paris."

"How on earth can she tolerate him?"

"She doesn't tolerate him. She only tolerates his money. He allows her to ruin him, and that pleases her. But it won't go on long; she is sick to death—dying of him; she has told me so."

"I say, Anastase, are you going to stay here all night? It's two o'clock now. I am getting tired of standing."

"I am not going before supper, diable!" retorted Anastase, "nor are you. The supper will be magnificent. Besides—are not you in the least tempted to throw down the gauntlet, and see if it is taken up? Just for the amusement, you know?"

"Throw down *what?*"

"Do you like metaphors?" asked Anastase, "or are you in the humour to prefer

plain English—or plain French? I can give you which you like."

"Suppose you try plain English?"

"Well, are you so ignorant as to suppose that Hélène does not know you are here to-night: does not know as much about you as you know yourself: would not, if you gave her one glance, or one word, throw the Count overboard before twelve to-morrow morning, and pitch herself with all her divine beauties straight into your arms?—Now then, Mr. Arthur Rochefort Longley, is that plain enough?"

Rochefort listened to him, with his heart throbbing as it had perhaps never throbbed in his life, and with his fine face flushed from brow to chin. He felt it as if every drop of blood in him boiled and beat; and St. Clair, looking at him, saw that it did.

"Mais grand Dieu!" he uttered, in some surprise, "cela ne te fait rien n'est-ce pas?"

Rochefort did not answer. The musicians had just struck up a waltz; and St. Clair amused himself by humming in accord with the sweet drawn-out, thrilling, flowing sounds—sounds that seemed to become sweeter and more thrilling as they were

repeated and dwelt on ; and at last, rising to one final burst of harmony—died away.

About five minutes after the dance was over, a very graceful and sweet-looking woman, not actually beautiful, but of beautiful figure, and exquisitely robed, more than dressed, in pale blue satin, passed where the two friends were standing—passed very slowly, and leaning on the arm of her danseur. The skirt of her satin dress touched Rochefort's feet, as she moved on. He drew back instinctively, and she turned her head for a moment, and said, "Pardon, monsieur." His slight bow was her only answer, but by some 'accident' a lovely moss-rose, one of a few flowers which were thrust behind the velvet bars of her bodice, fell at the young Englishman's feet, and remained there after she had passed on.

"Well?" said St. Clair, interrogatively—and as he received no answer, he continued, "she has saved you the trouble of the gauntlet business. What are you going to do?"

"Save her the trouble of any second challenge," returned Rochefort, with a sort of cool haughtiness that his friend could not

understand, after what he had seen in him only ten minutes before.

"Are you going to leave that rose *there*?" inquired St. Clair, almost in astonishment. "Why, you have nothing to do but drop your glove, pick it and that flower up in your hand together; loll out into the picture-room while you stick it in your button-hole; be back here by the time she comes within sight again; and you are the most envied man in all Paris before you leave this house, and the Comte de X— is given his congé before breakfast time to-morrow."

The moss-rose lay on the ground untouched.

"Are you a fool, or a saint, or a miser, Longley; which?" inquired his friend.

"Or only an Englishman; why don't you say that?" inquired Rochefort, "it would cap the list. St. Clair, are you going to stay supper, as you said you would, or not?"

"Yes; but I'll go directly after, if you like. I want to dance a little more."

"Well, I am insufferably hot, and I don't want any supper; so I'm going. Au revoir."

"And the rose lies there? That is your unalterable intention, Longley, is it?"

"Put it up on the console, if you like, or take it home with you. If I want moss-roses, I can have them from Riverswood," said Rochefort, as he moved away.

"What the devil," said St. Clair to himself, as he watched him go, "is that fellow made of? I will find out to-morrow, if I live to do it!"

The evening but one after, just as St. Clair was finishing dinner, Christine introduced Mr. Longley, who, when he had seated himself on his friend's low chair, still holding his hat in his hand, began—

"I want to go out into the country somewhere, and you'd better come with me. I don't know where to go, but you can manage that. Get your coat on, and let us be off."

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing; but it's too hot for the theatre. It's just the evening for driving. Well, will you come?"

"Yes, in half-an-hour. Ecoutez, mon garçon, I want to ask you something. Is it of the slightest use my giving myself any more trouble about you?"

"In what way?"

"You know in what way. Are you determined to refuse every chance of happiness or of distraction Paris can offer you, and to go on being solitary and miserable? I'm only talking for your own good. You are living the sort of life that will make a madman or a misanthrope of you. You were doing it when you were last here, and you are doing it now. Where's the use? Tell me."

"Look here, Anastase. If we are to come to close quarters about this, let us come to them now. We have been fencing long enough. What's your object in playing this devil's game with me?"

"It's just like you, of course, to call it a 'devil's game.' And I hold that you are totally wrong—particularly circumstanced as you are—to call it a devil's game, or anything like it."

"You know we have different opinions on some subjects."

"I know we have, and always shall have. . . . You are sacrificing yourself to illusions, to theories, to principles," said St. Clair, with a sort of sneering twang

on the word "principles," which he spoke in English. "What do you expect to gain by your asceticism, in this world or the other?"

"You appear to be resolved I shall gain very little by it in this," returned Rochefort. "What do you think I'm made of? Do you think my blood runs ice-cold in my veins, instead of hot? Do you think my heart cannot beat, or every pulse in my body throb, because I do not tell you every time the thermometer is up at fever-heat?"

"It was up at fever-heat last night," observed St. Clair, coolly; "and I saw no refrigerator near you anywhere. What was your cure? What was your medicine?"

Rochefort had risen from his chair, and taken one or two turns in the room. All at once he stopped before his friend, and said—

"If I were to tell you that you made me feel for five minutes last night as if I would have given half that I possess to hold that woman in my arms, would you believe me?"

St. Clair stared at him.

"I have not even a tincture of the blood

of an 'ascetic' in me," continued Longley, roused at last to strong excitement. "You do not know how utterly childish your talk is when you say so. I believe I could forget everything for a woman's love, if temptation and feeling together hurled me over a certain point! but, by God!" he exclaimed, almost setting his teeth, "neither you nor any other man, nor the devil himself, shall hurl me over it, while I have my reason."

He spoke with such passion that St. Clair felt as if the words were flung at him, and he said nothing for several minutes. When he did speak he said this :—

"It would be a different thing, Longley, if I wanted you to do anything wrong. I abominate anything that is criminal, or cruel, or destructive to peace, or to the union of a family, as much as you can do. I have very strict sentiments on the subject, as I've often told you, stricter than most men here at least. But this is another case altogether. You are free from all ties ; you would harm nobody by making yourself happy, and—enfin, shall I tell you the truth ?"

"The truth, certainly—if you can."

"Hélène is simply 'folle de vous.'"

"That is your imagination. You know nothing."

"I know what I have said to you."

"How do you know ?"

"She has told me so, herself."

"*Told* you so, St. Clair ?"

"She has been here, to this very house ; into my own studio,—her carriage waiting for her outside,—and she told me she was 'éperdument éprise de vous.' Now, are you satisfied ?"

"Satisfied—yes."

"And you are positively going to do nothing ? . . . Why, you are insulting the woman, Arthur ! You are a positive barbarian ! She would love you for six months, or more,—à distraction," he continued, presently. "She has not lost her heart yet. She had positively tears in her eyes, when she told me how she detested her 'Adolphe.' She bought a drawing, of course, a water-colour ; that's what she came for, tu comprends ? I took it down for her. Poor Hélène !"

Rochefort walked up and down the floor of the room in silence for a long time ; for

so long that St. Clair became wearied of waiting for him to speak. He was not flushed—was not excited now ; his face was very pale and his lips set. When he did speak his words appeared to be strangely irrelevant to the subject under discussion.

"Anastase," said he at last, "what do you believe will happen to us after this life ?"

"Are you raving ?" inquired St. Clair, after he had looked at him for a moment or two, and studied his face.

"No ; I was wondering what I believed myself. Sometimes it seems to me as if whatever goodness or strength we have in us were divine—must be divine, to stand against the frightful force of human temptations. Sometimes I feel as if it were all cowardice, and that one simply dreads the retribution of a future of which one cannot measure the torments, any more than one can measure the happiness."

"Well, mon vieux, I have wondered something like that, myself, to tell you the truth, though I never put the ideas into words. I think it is partly this entire uncertainty as to what the future life will be,

which should make us chary of holding the flesh in too hard and bitter a subjection on earth. We do not know after all that it is required of us."

"We do know it, St. Clair. I know it, in every sense and fibre of my soul; and I feel as if I should be committing murder, if I outraged my knowledge of it."

"But you are exceptional, Arthur. I never knew anyone have your theories on this subject. I consider them entirely 'exaltées' and impracticable, and you know yourself they are unusual. No one thinks as you do."

After a little silence, Rochefort suddenly asked,

"Do you think our impulses are all innocent then, and our nature all perfect?"

"Mon Dieu, non!" answered St. Clair. "Who does?"

"Well then, Anastase—what is sin?"

After some moments devoted exclusively to his pipe, or to his pipe and his thoughts, Anastase replied,

"I am not a theologian."

"Only an artist, and I only a deluded fool, I suppose you think? Well, it is

certain we shall come to no common conclusion, because we stand on no common ground; so there is no use in talking. St. Clair, are you coming out with me, or not?"

"Yes, at once, if you wish."

They went to the Louvre, where Rochefort's greys had been waiting in their stables and in harness, till the man was in despair.

"Take care, if you please, sir," he said, as he gave his master the reins; "Esmeralda is very skittish to-night."

"We'd better take her a turn or two in the Champs Elysées then, and get the nonsense out of her."

"Are not you going into the Bois then, to-night?" inquired St. Clair.

"I don't care about it. It will be so crowded. I wanted to go out by the Porte Maillot, into the St. Germain Road."

"You will be looked out for in the Bois, to-night."

"I suppose so, after what you have told me."

"And you have still no pity!"

"Yes, a great deal for myself. I am not going to be such an idiot as to be governed by a feeling that, if I do not feed it, will die out in three days.

"Then you confess you are not without feeling in this matter?"

"I have a very strong feeling about it at this present time."

"Longley, I believe some of you Englishmen are made of different stuff from the rest of the world. I defy any other men to understand you."

"Thanks for the compliment," returned Rochefort. "I assure you I take it as one. Keep your seat, Anastase; I must just touch the mare, and she won't like it."

A day or two after this, St. Clair walked over to see his friend with a three-volume novel of Y——'s under his arm, and with the intention of staying dinner; but Rochefort was going to dine at the English Embassy; so there was nothing for it but to accept a cup of coffee, with adjuncts, and to smoke a cigar, leaning against the mantel-shelf till it was time for his friend to dress.

"I've brought you back 'L'Histoire d'un Ménage,'" said St. Clair. "It was interesting. The man writes well, doesn't he?"

"Oh, yes! very well," answered Rochefort, rather idly.

"Are you going to sleep there, on that sofa?"

"No; but I rode Esmeralda about fifteen miles this morning before breakfast to exercise her, and she's not particularly delightful to ride. And I was up late at Lady K——'s; a stupid sort of 'at home' and musical party mixed. Forgot it till nearly twelve o'clock, and then had to rush there, and stop till it was nearly over, to make up."

"What have you been reading?" inquired St. Clair, noticing a goodly array of newspapers and books on the table.

"Oh, some travels in Syria and Palestine. I think I shall go there next spring."

"Haven't you been?"

"No."

St. Clair took the book up, looked at it for a few minutes, and then throwing it back on the table, said,

"You should read French books while you are in France. How many English books, 'Tauchnitz edition,' or otherwise, have you got on the table at this moment? —Six. Do you think we have no literature in France?"

"Literature!" repeated Rochefort, with a sudden emphasis, which made his friend turn and look at him, "yes; God knows if you have literature, and of what kind."

"Diable! I thought we should come to this some time! Do you mean to say, sir, that you have no bad literature in England?"

"I mean to say that a great portion of the French press gives itself up to bad literature, lends itself to a whole system of disseminating what is vile and sensual and immoral, as if it were a great decorated gin palace, giving out spiritual death with every draught." He was roused enough now.

"Yes; like one of your gin palaces, perhaps," retorted St. Clair, furiously; "remember, if you please, that the simile doesn't hold so good here. What sin or baseness, of any kind, can you get together in France, which balances, or half balances, the demoralization of your beastly English drunkenness? Tell me that."

"Drunkenness only affects the class which give way to it, or rather, the families of which it is the immediate curse. The spirit of your literature poisons the very air of

the country, there is no escape from it, the highest and the lowest, the young and the old, the rich and the poor, breathe it together. It saps, year by year, your energy, your strength, your pride, your purity, as a people. You will never—never on this earth—be a noble nation, St. Clair, till you create men who will create for you a new literature—a literature over which women need not blush, and which will make men purer instead of encouraging them to all impurity!"

"Encouraging them? Of what do you speak? what do you mean?" asked St. Clair, passionately; "you have no right to use such language. What you say is a libel on us."

"It is not a libel. It is the miserable, shameful truth. I tell you, lots of your books, and not the worst of them, books that are openly sold and read, and stand on your shelves, and that are beautifully written too, as we couldn't write such books, not only encourage to vice, but they make vice almost irresistible; they burn fires, on almost every page, to heat the blood of the reader, to inflame his heart, to

madden his brain ! You know I am right ; you have felt this, and I have felt it ; I have felt the awful, the hellish influence of such writing in every nerve I have. Talk of drinking ! Pooh ! drinking's nothing to it."

St. Clair sat perfectly silent, his face almost white, and his eyes fixed on the ground before him.

"It isn't," continued Longley, "that I am vain fool enough to suppose we have no sins of our own to account for in this way ; but I say deliberately, and I hold to it, that the entire spirit of our authors and our dramatists is diametrically opposed to yours. Take half a dozen of our best writers living, or only dead within the last few years, and try to pair them with any six, try to balance them with any hundred, of your own. It is impossible. You do not feel, you do not believe, you do not act, or think, or live, as we do, and you cannot write what is not in the life of the nation ! The more I see of you, the more I see how utterly below ours—in 'spite of all our brutalities, and absurdities, and roughnesses, which you ridicule—your national standard of morality and honour is."

"I deny it," interrupted St. Clair; "I hold that it waves every inch as high as yours. Where do you find the difference?"

"In the first place," answered Rochefort, cooling a little, "is there any idea of truth in France? of truth that is, as a necessary element in forming a nation and a government? You lie to each other; the newspapers lie (or lie virtually) to you; your governments lie to you; you are treated like children; you are pampered, coaxed, spoiled, and eternally flattered. You are flattered to the utmost extent language can go, by your journalists, your writers, your generals, your prefects, your governors; but by your journalists especially. They talk to you as if you were a body of school-boys, whom it was necessary to put into good humour, and into good conceit with themselves. Do we do that, St. Clair, in England? We never—or scarcely ever—praise up a lot of boys, or a body of soldiers, or any mass or class of people whatever. When they do right, it is because they have to do it, and because doing wrong would not be tolerated. Your writers, of all sorts, try to inflate you to a degree ruinous to all real pride and manli-

ness; they are never tired of doing it, and they always think there is room left to inflate you more."

Fortunately for the friendship of the two men, something in Rochefort's last sentence struck on St. Clair's sense of the ludicrous, and instead of breaking out into declamation as he intended, he burst out laughing.

"It is all too absolutely absurd," he said at last; "I would argue with you, if anything you said was worth it; but it is only your inherent and inalienable English conceit that happens to have got you by the collar just now. So I shall not expend 'mes forces' on you, which are at low ebb already, for I want my dinner."

"I wish I could give you some. But I must go and dress, I'm afraid. By-the-bye, what do you think of Y——'s book, now you've read it? You haven't told me."

"I think it's highly moral, and very clever; and all the first part is put together like a beautiful piece of mosaic."

"Yes, the first volume is exquisitely done. But shall I tell you what I think? That M. 'Jean Jacques' instead of being accom-

modated at the end of the third volume with every earthly blessing, including his wife's entire devotion, deserved simply hanging and quartering."

"That is your English want of sympathy and perception, of course," answered St. Clair; and then—suddenly recollecting that it was impossible his friend should think otherwise than with bitter hardness of M. Jean Jacques's peculiar weaknesses, or rather deliberate sins—he added, hastily, "of course I confess he was not after my taste. I have told you before, I am very strict in my sentiments, and don't approve of that sort of thing. But I suppose, Longley, you don't deny for an instant, that there are plenty of such men as Y——'s hero in England, as well as in France?"

"Yes," answered Rochefort, briefly; "but society in England is not tainted to anything like the extent it is here, by the presence of women who would act the part of Elöise. We have bad and faithless women among us, God knows; but all our laws of marriage and of domestic life prevent society, with us, from being shamed by them, as it is with you. Your whole

system for the bringing up of women, is cowardly, and false to nature. You take them straight out of their convent, or their school-room, and pitch them into the arms of some fellow you have chosen for them, of whom they know nothing; and whom they are allowed to see half-a-dozen or a dozen times, in the presence of their mother."

"And quite proper that it should be in the presence of their mother," returned St. Clair coolly; "my daughter will see her fiancé in the presence of her mother, I can tell you."

"Then I herewith, of course, accept the stigma you cast on the name of your countrymen in saying so," replied Rochefort, with a sort of cool irony, that put St. Clair into a fury.

"I never in my life," he exclaimed, "saw anything to equal your confounded conceit or blindness to all the sins and shortcomings of your own nation! Why, it is a crying shame, and known to be one, that your English girls are taught and forced (if they want to marry at all) to resort to every scheme for catching a husband they, or their mothers, can invent! Pray which

is the best or the most modest? For the parents to choose the husband, or for the girl herself to be put to angle year after year till she catches one, 'n'importe qui?'"

"You've drawn a pleasing sketch of English manners and customs," returned his friend; "but after all—and at the worst—St. Clair, isn't it better for the women to court, and to be courted before they are married, than after? And du reste, by far the greater portion of marriages in England are almost purely marriages of affection."

"So you say," answered St. Clair, "I should doubt it. Let us have statistics!"

"Statistics—nonsense! Everyone knows what society is with you, Anastase. You all know it! I have met men in France, I knew a physician in Y—— where I was ill, last year, for a week or so—who told me things I don't care to think of again—things which are usual here, but which are almost unheard of in society in England. . . . . And every year at the French and German baths, there are French women who have left husbands and children at home—and have come where they are

for the express purpose of meeting their lovers; and are hardly ashamed of it."

As Rochefort finished speaking and rose from his chair, he encountered a peculiar look on his friend's face, which made a sudden burning and painful colour suffuse his own, even to his neck.

"I know I have no right to talk so to you," he said sadly, after the blush had died away, and left him paler than before. After a moment, however, he held out his hand; and St. Clair's meeting it, the two remained in a strong, unfaltering clasp for several moments.

"Well," said Longley at last; "you can have your retaliation now. Tu peux me le rendre, mon ami! Are not you going to do it?"

"No,—we will fight it out another time. Besides, you said what was true I'm afraid; though you think worse of these sort of things than I do. Bon soir mon vieux," and with this very generous speech the artist lighted his pipe, and two minutes afterwards was on his way home.

CHAPTER V.

One evening shortly after this, when the friends had not seen each other for ten days, Rochefort having occupied that interim in going to Strasbourg by way of a change, St. Clair presented himself by invitation, at the table-d'hôte at the Louvre; and the two had an hour together of ceaseless "causerie" and eating. When they came to the dessert, and there had been a moment's pause in the conversation, Anastase said, "By-the-bye, Longley, if you have nothing better to do, will you come up with me to Auteuil this evening? It is my little cousin's fête, and I am going to take her a bouquet."

"Yes;—will you go by train, or drive?"

"By train, if you don't mind; I want to

stay an hour or two. I have been so busy, I haven't been there for weeks."

Half an hour afterwards they set off.

* * * *

"There, that's my aunt's campagne," said the artist, when they had reached Auteuil, and after walking a little way found themselves in front of a pretty little stuccoed villa, or cottage, with garden, statues, flowers, "gazon," shady trees; four windows with drab shutters, dove-cote, and little open-work, iron entrance-gates, all complete; "isn't it pretty?"

"Yes; we shan't knock down the drawing-room as we go in, shall we?" asked the Englishman.

"Impertinent!—Ah, voilà ma tante! Bon soir, chère tante; me voilà à la fin.—Allow me to introduce to you my friend," &c.

"Madame sa tante" (not the aunt whom Rochefort had known at Harrow, but another) was a rather grave and sharp-looking old lady, with very grey hair, rather bent, wearing a black silk dress with a lace shawl drawn about it; and possessing a pair of searching and rather cold, grey eyes. She

bowed a little stiffly to "the friend;" she kissed her nephew, telling him he was "méchant" not to have come to see them before; she smelt the flowers of the bouquet, exclaiming in rather a mechanical tone of voice, "Dieu!—Dieu! quel beau bouquet!" And then she called out in a shrill tone, "Angèle! Angèle, chère enfant! viens donc voir ton cousin."

A few minutes afterwards, as Mr. Longley, with his back towards his friend, was engaged in exchanging a few commonplaces with the old lady—who still held the bouquet—on the subject of that nosegay in particular, and of all flowers in general, he was startled by hearing a voice almost close behind him, exclaim in very pretty, sweet, frank French—

"Ah! that is right, monsieur, to come and see me at last! I was only behind there with the doves, but I would not come out at first. You are nearly excommunicated for ever from my good graces, Anastase. You have behaved shamefully lately." And turning round, he saw St. Clair—at a little distance—kiss on both cheeks a young lady, who looked about three or four and

twenty, and who was holding an amber-coloured parasol over her dark head. She had a dress of black tarlatane, or gauze, a little relieved about the body with black beads, or beaded lace, which shone in the soft evening sunlight; and her only adornments were a massive black chain and cross, and a "gloire de Dijon" rose on her breast.

"My friend, Mr. Longley—my cousin, Madame Arnaud," said St. Clair, turning with her towards his friend.

Madame Arnaud was not extremely pretty, but she had very fine eyes, and a manner so entirely French in its exquisite grace and ease, that description of it, in any English words, is impossible. Her hair was nearly black, and she wore no hat or ornament of any kind, with the exception of two jet pins run through her heavy plaits to keep them in place.

"Will you have some tea, if I order it?" asked Madame Arnaud, presently. "I know how to make tea," she added, turning to her cousin's English friend with an irresistible charm in her frank, sweet voice and expression; "you English gentlemen think

that no French women can make tea, don't you?"

Of course there was nothing for the gentleman addressed to reply, but that he had no doubt at all madame could make tea, or do anything else well.

"No, monsieur, I cannot do everything —I cannot speak a word of English, and I see you can speak French perfectly."

"If it is good enough for madame, it is of course perfect for me," replied the Englishman, as in duty bound.

"Mais, monsieur—are you going to pay me compliments all the evening?" asked Madame Arnaud, with a half-dissatisfied intonation in her voice he could not quite understand; "I hope you are not. I thought the English gentlemen did not flatter, and I get tired of flattery. I have enough of it!"

"You have enough of it, madame?"

"Yes—and sometimes too much. And if monsieur," she added, "will make a treaty with me, to pay me no more compliments, I shall be very—*really*—grateful to him."

"But, madame, you are exacting a promise it will be terribly hard to keep!"

"Compliment number *trois*," said the pretty French woman, laughing; "but are you then incorrigible, monsieur? No, I assure you I was in earnest. Will you not do me the pleasure of promising me?" He had to think for a moment or two, to avoid the unpardonable sin of making a fourth compliment out of his answer.

"Yes, madame, I promise you. You have effectually 'fait mon education' on this point now."

"How 'fait votre education?'" she repeated, with a sort of playful drawn-out emphasis on the three words. "I am too ignorant to make anyone's education effectually, monsieur."

"Of what is madame ignorant then?"

"For one thing, I am ignorant even of how to amuse people, or make them come to see me; am I not, Anastase?" she inquired, appealing at last, and with rather a touching expression in her voice, to her cousin, who had been standing close by, and listening to her badinage with some amusement.

"Forgive me, Angélique; I will be a good boy for the future. I have been painting so hard."

"Oh oui!" returned his cousin, with a sudden glance and tone of mockery and disbelief. "Je te crois—va! Has my cousin been painting so very hard, monsieur, do you think, that he could not possibly come to see me?"

Again a pause, occupied by the gentleman appealed to in desperate attempts to fabricate another answer which should be devoid of flattery. It was hard work.

"He tells me he has been very busy, madame."

"Well, and what have you been painting, then?" inquired Angèle, with her chin resting on her pretty hand, and her elbow on her knee—she was seated on a low garden-chair.

St. Clair devoted a few seconds to the suddenly-called-for exercise of his imagination, and then, glancing across at his friend as he spoke, answered fluently,

"Oh, some country scenes, and a painting of two nuns in a convent garden, and a little picture of a saint."

"Mais mon Dieu, c'est assez!" pronounced Madame Arnaud in some astonishment; "I shall come and see them some day. Ils doivent être jolis!"

"Oh, they are all sold. I sold them as soon as they were finished," answered Anastase with precipitation. "No; when I have anything pretty to show you I will let you know. There is nothing but rubbish about at present. Drawings of skeletons, and that sort of thing."

"Don't you find my cousin very absurd?" inquired Angèle, appealing to Mr. Longley. "One never knows whether he is telling one the truth or not. Are there really so many drawings of skeletons in his studio?"

It was impossible to help laughing.

"Well, n'importe, Angèle; here is tea," said St. Clair, "and here is mamma back again. Now, then, Longley, you shall see if Angèle can make tea!"

"Ah, quelle malheur! mamma has made it!" exclaimed Madame Arnaud, looking into the teapot. "You see, I have been idling my time, while she has been thinking of us all. And now, you will never know, Mr. Longli—did I say that right?—how well I can make tea!"

They sat over the pretty cups of French china, with the fragrant, creamless tea steaming from them—the little plates of

"pain beurré" and of tiny cakes, covered with chocolate—for nearly an hour: Angélique, by her pretty questions and fascinating repartees, and rapid, bright glances from her dark eyes, making the time pass as if it were ten minutes. Her mother appeared to watch and listen to her with an entire, though undemonstrative, devotion, during the whole time, she herself possessing no tincture of her daughter's life and piquancy, but preserving a rather indifferent and cool manner towards her visitors, and not opening her mouth half a dozen times. At last the gentlemen rose to go.

"I am going to have a party for mamma's fête next week, Anastase," said Madame Arnaud, as they wished good-bye. "I had nearly forgotten to tell you. Will you come? I dare not ask monsieur," she added, turning very slightly towards the person referred to, "for this is quite an unpretending affair—only tea and coffee, and a little music, and so on."

"I shall be delighted to come, Angèle, I assure you," said her cousin.

"Then come in good time," put in madame sa mère, "because it tires 'ma fille'

entertaining so many people at once ; and I cannot talk to people. Cela m'ennuie trop!"

"What day is it?" asked Anastase.

"Wednesday. Coffee at half-past seven, if you please. Eh bien, adieu donc!" concluded Madame Arnaud, receiving her cousin's kiss, and then bowing, with a pretty reserve and grace of manner, to his friend.

"I suppose, if monsieur likes to come, you will let him, Angèle?" inquired St. Clair, carelessly.

"Would monsieur like to come?" asked Madame Arnaud at once, lifting her eyes frankly to his face, but only for a moment.

"If madame will accord me the honour, I shall be only too happy."

On their way home, Rochefort began,

"What did you mean, Anastase, by telling me your cousin was a little girl?"

"I didn't say so."

"I beg your pardon. Well, you implied it, then."

"You're mistaken entirely. Eh bien! what do you think of her?"

"Is she 'tant soit peu coquette?'" inquired

Rochefort, with a sort of carelessness in his voice, but fixing his friend with his eyes as he spoke. They were in the railway carriage together, and on seats facing each other.

"No; as frank and innocent as a little school-girl. If I told you she was my betrothed, should you be inclined to congratulate me?"

A slight colour rose to Longley's face, as he repeated,

"Your betrothed? Has she not been married already? Is she married? Why did you call her 'madame?'"

"Four solemn questions," answered St. Clair, laughing. "I had better answer them backward. I called her 'madame' because—yes—she has been married, and she is now a widow. Betrothed to her? No; I wish I were. I couldn't afford to marry her if she would have me; and she doesn't care for me. You could see that, I suppose?"

"I thought she was very 'gentille pour toi,'" answered his friend.

"Exactly," answered St. Clair, throwing up his hands, with a gesture as if that finished the matter; "et voilà tout. How-

ever, qu'est-ce que cela signifie? It is not in my rôle to marry at present. I like my freedom, and I do not—in fact, I do not care for domestic life."

"Does Madame Arnaud live with her mother, or her mother with her?" inquired Rochefort.

"She lives with her mother. Her husband was a stupid, spiritless fellow, entirely unworthy of the possession of such an angel. She was married to him when her father thought he had lost almost every franc he possessed; and this fellow, this Arnand, though she did not like him, was accepted for her, because he was infatuated, and would take her without 'dot;' and promised to support her parents as well as herself. After they had been married a few months, it turned out that he had entirely and intentionally mis-stated his circumstances, in order to possess himself of Angèle. He had given himself out as the acknowledged heir of an old uncle, living somewhere near Bordeaux; and when the uncle died he left almost every sou he was worth to another relation. Arnand was a wine merchant,

and said he was doing a good business—cooked up his accounts, and lied in pen and ink as far as he dared, to deceive old Chollet (Angèle's father, tu comprends); and so, in fact, as I told you, they were married, she not caring a farthing for the fellow, of course. Well, she soon learnt to detest him. At last she left him, and went back to live with her parents; and very hard lines it was for them all too. I don't know how on earth they lived. After old Chollet's death, the investment which he had thought was his ruin turned out an unexpected success. The money came to his widow, and she and Angélique are comfortable—moderately so, of course—for the rest of their lives."

"And the husband?" inquired Rochefort, parenthetically.

"Oh,—ah,—yes," answered St. Clair, a little confused for a moment. "He died two or three years ago. I hardly know where. He lived at those gambling places in Germany; in fact, he was worth nothing. Poor Angélique! and that has been her experience of married life!" * * *

Madame Arnaud's little party was a very

pretty little affair, and as a matter of course, went off well, with a hostess of such consummate grace, tact, and liveliness. There were two or three gentlemen present, with one of whom—a young officer—Angèle appeared to be a great favourite, but whom she treated with singular sang-froid and nonchalance. There were two or three married women, with their husbands; two of them young, and one of them a bride, and very pretty and happy-looking—her husband of five-and-twenty, who was just started in his profession as a doctor, appearing to worship the very ground on which his young wife trod.

"Look there, you sceptic, you brute!" said St. Clair over his friend's shoulder. "Will you say now that there are no happy marriages in France?"

"Have I ever said so yet?"

"Very nearly."

"I think we are 'quits,' Anastase, on that particular subject."

Anastase laughed, and moved away.

Rochefort had come up to Auteuil very late in the evening. He had been dining out, and could not get there before. He

was standing just inside the doorway of the salon, listening to a bright French song with a great deal of "Tra-la-la" in it, and description of some "vie joyeuse," when Madame Arnaud passed him, and a sudden colour spread itself over her dark, expressive features.

"Ah, monsieur! I thought you were not coming. I thought you had forgotten me."

"On the contrary, madame; I have been thinking of you for the last three hours. I had my horses brought round to where I was, and I came here as fast as they would bring me. I was obliged to dine out. I had forgotten the engagement when I was last here."

"Have you so many friends then in Paris?" asked Angèle, in rather a changed and a less buoyant voice.

"Just now I happen to have several. I had introductions you see," he added, as she looked up to him in a half-puzzled way, "and I was obliged to use them."

"I see, of course."

Angèle seated herself on a worked 'prie-dieu' chair, very near him, and when she was seated, continued—

"In that case, monsieur, I ought to think myself very much honoured by your coming here at all."

"I assure you the honour done is to me, madame."

"Do you mean what you say?" demanded Madame Arnaud. "I assure you, monsieur, I release you from the obligation of so many compliments. Did not you tell me I had 'effectually made your education' sur ce point?" she added, with one of her irresistible smiles. The first part of her speech had been uttered in a tone she had not given him time to analyze or comprehend.

"Then you intend to hold me to my promise, madame? You do not forget it."

"No; I shall hold you to every promise you make to me," returned Angélique, half seriously.

He looked at her, but did not answer for a few moments.

She was playing in a rapid, negligent way, with her pretty spangled black fan, not looking at it, but at some of her guests at the other side of the room. This being the case he could study her expression, for the few minutes that she remained silent,

without her perceiving—or at least seeming to perceive that he did so; and Madame Arnaud was not an object which it was easy to look on, in any of her moods, with impunity.

"Qu'il fait chaud!" she exclaimed, presently, and then, rising, went to one of the windows, looped back the curtains, which had been allowed to fall over the open space—for every window in the house was wide open—and in two minutes had so managed matters that everybody was out in the garden, enjoying the cool air and the moonlight.

"I have been asked to bring you this shawl, Madame Arnaud," said a voice over her shoulder, as she walked slowly along the path, leaning on her cousin's arm, "shall I put it on for you?"

"Oh, I hope it is nothing hot. The cool air is so delightful!"

"It is only a little silk scarf, or something of that sort. Have I put it on right?"

"Angèle, if you don't mind my leaving you for a moment—I want five minutes' talk with that Michel about something," said Anastase, at this juncture, "I haven't had a chance all evening," and he made off.

Rochefort gave Madame Arnaud his arm without a word, and she taking it, they walked along together up and down the gravel path, and about the little lawn with its little flower beds, and little statues.

"You have travelled a great deal, have you not, monsieur?" inquired Angèle, presently.

"Not very much, or very far. I hope to travel more."

"Ah, you speak in that way because you are English, and the English are such indefatigable travellers. I should think I had been all over the world if I had been where you have!"

"Then is geography one of the things of which madame is so ignorant?" asked Rochefort. It was impossible to help looking down on her as he said it, and noticing the black eyelashes on her dark cheek, and the pretty mouth, and the little jewelled hand, holding together the folds of the black scarf upon her breast.

"Ah, I see I must not come to monsieur for my 'diplôme,' when I want one," answered Madame Arnaud, "I have myself ruined my reputation!"

"I am very sorry; but I am 'défendu' from saying anything complimentary to you. Will you give me a 'dispensation,' and trust to me for not using it ungenerously?"

"No, monsieur," she answered, shaking her head, "I have told you I will hold you to all your promises! But what were we talking of?—oh, travelling—and I said I should be quite satisfied if I had travelled half as much as you have."

"And *I* feel as if there were the whole world still to see," answered the Englishman.

"Monsieur, do you like being away so much from home?"

"I often go back home. I am going home again in September."

"Shall you stay in Paris till then?" asked Angélique.

"I shall go to Switzerland for August, and perhaps for July—somewhere up in the mountains to be cool."

"Ah!" exclaimed Madame Arnaud, impatiently, after a little silence, "don't talk to me of Switzerland, and the mountains, and travelling, any more. It makes me restless: I cannot travel—and sometimes in the hot

summer, it is as if one were a cooped up bird here, without air or liberty!" And after that she made the move back into the drawing-room.

That night Rochefort and his friend were the last to leave the little country-house. Anastase stayed to talk over the party with his aunt and cousin, for it had been a great event. Angèle had only given two parties before in her life. They noticed as they stood about the little salon, talking and laughing, and making their comments on the events of the evening, that old Madame Chollet looked white and fatigued, and all at once Anastase said, "But I see 'tante Henriette' looks more than ready for bed, Angèle, so we will be off. Make her take a biscuit and a glass of liqueur, or brandy-and-water. She is overdone."

"Mamma has been helping me so much all day," returned her daughter, "I did not want her to do it, but she would; and now the talking and the music have tired her out. Yes; good-night—good-bye. Allez-vous en, maintenant."

"Come and ask after me in a day or two, Anastase," said Mme. Chollet, speaking

apparently with some difficulty. "I don't feel well. Je me sens affreusement fatiguée."

The gentlemen wished good-night, and left; but before they had gone many yards from the house, along the road, they heard the terrified voice of Madame Arnaud's bonne, calling after them,

"Messieurs — messieurs! revenez vite! Madame se trouve mal. Mon Dieu, M. Anastase, revenez vite, de grâce!"

The poor lady had had a paralytic stroke, and was lying back speechless in her chair. She had taken the biscuit and brandy and water her daughter had given her, upon St. Clair's recommendation; had been taken suddenly sick, and had then fallen back, in the state they found her in. Angèle was deadly pale, and trembling from head to foot, but self-possessed and ready to do all that she was told. The two gentlemen lifted poor Mme. Chollet on to a sofa in the next room, and then Anastase ran for the nearest doctor. While he was gone, Longley stayed in the room with Angélique, who was kneeling at her mother's side, the tears streaming from her eyes, a crucifix in her hand, and praying as fast as her terror

and her sobs would let her. It was very touching. There was only one servant in the house, the maid who had come to help for the evening, being gone home with her mistress ; and this one, this poor "Lisette," who had been for ten years in Mme. Chollet's service, was wringing her hands, and almost useless from distress and alarm.

"I must stay the night here," said St. Clair, half-an-hour afterwards, speaking to his friend in the passage ; "Angélique thinks her mother is dying. The doctor says not, and he has revived her, but still I cannot leave my cousin in such distress."

"Of course not. Well, good-night, then. I shall hear from you to-morrow, how Mme. Chollet is. Would you like me to drive the horses up here, early to-morrow morning, and take you home? It will be exercise for them."

"That would be very good of you, old fellow. Well, do. Good-night."

CHAPTER VI.

One day, perhaps a week after the incident just referred to, it happened that St. Clair and one or two friends of his, turned into Rochefort's rooms after the theatre to have supper, to talk "art" and other things, and to impregnate the furniture with smoke. The conversation for some twenty minutes turned upon Rome, and St. Clair soon had the table covered with a mass of photographs of statuary, mosaics, pots, rosaries, lava, and what not, which Rochefort had collected promiscuously, and as the fancy took him, during the few weeks he had just spent in Italy. Among other things there was a silver crucifix, very beautifully carved; and after the other men had wished good-night and were gone, St. Clair asked,

as he leaned over the table, and took it up in his hands,

"What made you get this, Longley? Are you going to become a son of the true Church?"

"I got it for a lady—a friend of mine in England."

"Catholic?"

"No; only High Church."

"Which is a little more than Catholic," responded Anastase with one of the sudden slight smiles which showed to perfection both his rows of white teeth under his brown moustache. "And is she going to be the happy woman, some day?"

"She is married already, and has two or three children. Have the goodness not to push the thing away in that indifferent manner, St. Clair. It has been blessed by the Pope," pursued Mr. Longley.

It had been blessed after this wise. A few weeks before, Rochefort had been driving out in the neighbourhood of Rome, with some friend whom he had come across during his short stay there, when the driver suddenly pulled up, and exclaimed that "Il Papa" was coming along the road

towards them—walking, and attended by some of the Cardinals. The man descended from his seat, and the two travellers did the same. The Italian knelt; the Englishmen took off their hats, and slightly bent their heads, as His Holiness approached. The thought suddenly occurred to Rochefort to draw out of his pocket the crucifix he had bought that morning for Lady Clara Debenham; he laid it down upon his open hand; and as the Pope passed, he blessed, with his two up-raised fingers and a kind smile, the little group of men by the road-side, and the shining, outstretched figure of the dying Christ. Rochefort gave St. Clair this little recital, and at the end of it, Anastase said,

"I wish I had such a charming little piece of 'argenterie bénite' to give my cousin. She is not more of a believer in such things than is pretty in a woman—but her mother is. She would almost give her eyes for such a thing, now that she is ill."

"Mme. Chollet is very dévote then?" inquired his friend.

"Rather! Have I never told you that she is a Roman by birth? She would adore

any rag brought to her from Rome; and would have gone back to live there long ago, I imagine, but that Angélique prefers Paris."

"Madame Chollet an Italian?" said Rochefort, as he raised his eye-brows a little.

"She doesn't look like it, does she? Her father was noble, I must tell you: one of three sons who were all 'Counts,' as the delightful fashion is amongst us foreigners; and he married a Frenchwoman—tante Henriette's mother tu comprends?—When he and his wife were dead, Henriette came to live with a relation at Tours, and married old Chollet rather late in life. She had no 'dot,' you see, or none to speak of. That's the family history."

"Madame Arnaud looks more of an Italian than her mother."

"Yes; characteristics are often reproduced in the third generation, you know," answered St. Clair; "and my opinion is, that Mademoiselle Angélique has a very good cup-full of Italian blood in her veins. However, it's getting late. I must say good-night." And St. Clair rose to go.

"You can have that crucifix for Madame Chollet, if you think it will give her the least pleasure," said Rochefort, from his position against the mantelpiece.

"Comment?" ejaculated St. Clair, in some astonishment.

"I say, you can have the crucifix, if you like."

"And how about your friend in England?"

"I can go back and get her another."

"Get her another? Where from?"

"From Rome. It isn't far," said the Englishman.

"Are you serious?"

"I am quite serious in saying that if the crucifix will be of any value to your cousin —to your aunt, I mean—you can have it. It is promised to nobody."

"You are very amiable. Well, I believe it will help the poor lady to get better, if it doesn't cure her, of its own unassisted powers."

"Will you take it to Auteuil, then, or shall I?"

"Oh, you take it," answered St. Clair, "if you don't mind. I shall be very busy to-

morrow ; besides, it's your present, give it yourself. My cousin will think it 'du dernier galant,' I assure you."

The next evening, Mr. Longley drove his horses to Auteuil, and gave up the reins before the little iron gates of Madame Chollet's villa.

He was shown into the empty salon, with its white and gold walls, its velvet-covered furniture, its heavy striped rep hangings, its pretty French ornaments and mirrors, and its sweetly and faintly scented atmosphere. He was standing near the open window, and looking out into the little garden, when Madame Arnaud presented herself. A few minutes sufficed for the ordinary exchange of civilities, and of "kind inquiries;" and then, with a little more hesitation in his French, and in his manner than he had ever shown before her yet—it was not the first time he had seen Madame Arnaud since the accident that had befallen her mother—Rochefort told her why he had come, and what he had brought. Angélique opened the case, uttered an exclamation of delight, proceeded to kiss the hands, the feet, the forehead of the crucified figure,

and then, like some grateful child, took one of Longley's hands within her own, and touched it with her trembling soft lips.

"Monsieur," she said, "I cannot thank you enough. My mother is an Italian, and she is very fond of 'ce pauvre cher Pape.' She loves everything from Rome. And you see, there is no deception or mistake about this. It will give her great comfort, even if it does nothing more for her." She caressed the case as she held it in her white hands; (what exquisite hands some French-women have!)—she smoothed the black velvet lining; she kissed the carved, silver figure again, murmuring over it words which he could not hear. To Rochefort, there was something vaguely, but inexpressibly painful, in this taking to her heart, as it were, of a symbol which represented at once such suffering, such fortitude, and such slighted love. But Angélique had almost forgotten that she was watched. For the moment, she was abandoned to her religion, to the thought of her mother, to her mingled and troubled feelings of hope, and fear, and happiness, and veneration.

"I will take it to mamma soon," she

said; "but she is asleep now, and I will not disturb her."

She seated herself, with the crucifix still in her hands, on an ottoman near the window. Rochefort sat facing her, holding his hat before him; and the horses were driven slowly up and down in the road, outside the little garden gates.

"Monsieur," said Angélique, presently, "are not you a Protestant? I thought almost all English people were."

"I am a Protestant, madame."

"But you had this crucifix blessed by the Pope? You do not believe in the Pope, do you?"

"I believed in the Pope to the extent of getting out of my carriage, because he was walking. Is not that a good deal for an Englishman to do, madame?"

"It is a good deal for an Englishman to do, to take care of, and then give away to a person he hardly knows . . . . a treasure like this," replied Madame Arnaud. "That is in *la vrai réligion*," she went on after a moment's pause, "to respect people's beliefs, and to have sympathy with the sorrows and the desires of others."

Madame Arnaud uttered this little speech with the natural tact, feeling, and expression which make the slightest phrases of so many Frenchwomen so charming. They can say what it is in them to say without stiffness, without hesitation, without "mauvaise honte;" and words come to them as easily as song to a bird.

"I am very much touched that you think I have shown the least sympathy with you," said Rochefort, breaking the short silence that fell upon them both after Angélique had spoken; "it has been a very little thing to do."

"Eh bien, monsieur, all one's happiness or misery in life is made up of very little things . . . . The beginnings of almost everything are so little, the errors and the faults one makes all begin with such slight inclinations this way or that, and then they lead us just where we would not go!"

"God knows you are right," said Rochefort, sadly; "but I should have thought—I should have hoped, that you did not know much of what such errors in life were."

"Yes, I know them," returned Madame Arnaud; "and I know that it is best to

begin right. It is best to be good and true —true, I mean, to oneself; and, above everything, *loving*, in whatever one does. One does not make mistakes then. *One follows one's heart.*"

"You think then, that one's heart always leads one right?" asked Rochefort. "It has not been my experience."

"It has not been mine," returned Madame Arnaud; "but that is because I have never followed my heart . . . . As it is—though I am so young—I am seeing the only hope of my life—the only person, literally, for whom I have to live—fading away gradually from before my eyes."

It happens to most of us, perhaps, once in a lifetime, that we meet a man or woman between whom and ourselves no long, wearisome road has to be traversed before we reach the point at which we instinctively join hands, and feel, and think, and suffer together, without hindrance or mist between.

Angélique had never been more truly herself, during her whole life, than she was with this man of whom she knew so little, and in whom she confided so fatally up to a certain point—and then no more.

"I think half the people in the world," said Rochefort, "live only half the life of which they are capable. And the bitterest part of it is, that one *suffers* so unspeakably in only living the half. I suppose, sometime—if we have patience to wait—we shall live our lives *out*, and know our own powers of happiness and of work at last."

Madame Arnaud did not answer at once. After a few moments, however, and making an evident effort to clear her throat, she said,

"I have never known real happiness, monsieur. I would give years of my life to know it for only a few days. It must be very beautiful."

Very beautiful! To whose fate would it fall, to make the whole earth beautiful to this woman for a few days—for a few years? A wild impulse rushed to Rochefort's heart, as it probably would have done to the heart of any man so circumstanced—to make himself that creator, that magician. It came to him, for the first time, in this hour, that he had the power to be it. What he did, of course, was to sit absolutely still, and not to speak again till his voice was thoroughly under control.

"Did you mean your mother, when you spoke of the only hope of your life?" he asked, after a little pause.

"Yes; my mother. In her I shall lose my shelter, my friend, my protector, everything. It is terrible for me to look forward to it. You have no idea how terrible."

"I can imagine any loss by death, or by separation, to be terrible," answered Rochefort. "I hope most earnestly that you will not be called on to endure such a sorrow. . . . Is Madame Chollet very ill, do you think?"

What else could he say? It was a miserably commonplace question with which to damp her sweet, frank confidences; but could he utter any of the thoughts which her reliance on his sympathy, brought thronging to his heart, and almost to his lips? They must all be forced back, and that conventional "Is Madame Chollet very ill?" brought out instead.

"I am afraid she is. When I think about it alone, and with nothing to buoy me up, I am sure of it. But I cannot tell you what a pleasure this beautiful crucifix, which she will know has really been looked

on, and blessed, by the Pope, will be to her. You must let me tell you again, monsieur, how much obliged to you I am."

Of course the conversation was now on safe and ordinary ground again, lighted by the grey light of ordinary grey day. The vivid stage-lights that had begun to burn went out suddenly the curtain dropped over the boards, on which something like a tragedy à deux might have been played. It had all been done by those five words, "Is Madame Chollet very ill?"

"Does your attendance on your mother try you?" asked Rochefort, looking a little anxiously into her dark sweet face. "You do not look well."

"No; I am harassed, of course, et un peu fatiguée. But one cannot always choose one's duties. And my last remaining one is to nurse and to console my mother. I shall never complain of it."

"Are you right in looking at life through such dark glasses? I do not see why you should." He rose as he spoke.

"No, monsieur, you do not see—of course. But have I asked you to look through my glasses on my life?" demanded Angélique,

with a sudden smile, momentary, but utterly irresistible, crossing her eyes and lips. "I would not be so cruel, I assure you."

Mr. Longley's horses were just passing the iron garden-gates at a slow walk, and his man saw him rise, and stopped them till he came out.

"Adieu, madame," said Rochefort, holding out his ungloved hand.

"Adieu, monsieur," said the lady, with one of her distant, and exceedingly graceful little French bows; "dites bien des choses de ma part, à mon cousin Anastase, s'il vous plaît." And thus they parted.

Madame Arnaud, when she was left alone, went up to her room, and choked with crying, before her little oratory, and her wax figure of the Virgin, for an hour. She would have made a pretty and a sad picture, with her bowed head, her rosary falling over her clasped hands, her——but let that be enough. The scene is distressing to write, or to think about, and it was pitiably distressing to go through. She loved this proud, tender, reserved, honourable, young Englishman; she loved him for him-

self, she would have loved him if he had not possessed a hundred francs in the world. She said to herself, "The woman was a brute and an 'imbécile,' who ran away from such a husband;" and she gave away her own heart unreservedly, and for the first time during her five and twenty years of chequered life.

CHAPTER VII.

Had it not been for this accident to Madame Chollet, the acquaintance between Madame Arnaud and her cousin's friend would probably never have amounted to anything worth writing about. As it was, Rochefort saw Angélique in moods, in "situations," in difficulties, sometimes in heart-rending distress, which it would have required a heart absolutely inhuman to see her in, without loving her.

* * * *

The days began to be blanks to him, when he did not see her face, hear the sound of her now saddened, and often faltering voice, and express to her his sympathy.

She was exquisite in her tenderness, her sorrow, her loneliness, her pretty gratitude

for all that was done for her, and her varying hopes and fears.

Day after day Rochefort made some excuse for going to Auteuil. Now, it was simply to inquire after Madame Chollet "de la part d'Anastase;" now to take flowers, fruit, books; anything and everything that could by possibility give a little pleasure to the invalid, or to her devoted attendant. But every visit had one object, and in reality one object only, that of having half an hour with Madame Arnaud in the little salon, while his horses were walked up and down the road in front of the house.

Twice Madame Chollet appeared to rally: and when Rochefort or Anastase called, Angélique would come down with a smile on her rather worn face, and with a shake of the hand, or a kiss, as the case might be, say, "Mamma is certainly better. We may get her round still. The 'sister' who is with me, is so very good and kind!" Once, however, after one of these speeches, she burst into tears, saying to St. Clair, "Oh mon cousin! tu prieras pour elle, n'est-ce pas, et pour moi? C'est tout ce que j'ai au monde!" That "c'est tout ce

que j'ai au monde," rung in the ears of one of her hearers, for nights and days afterwards.

It was about a week after this, that poor Madame Chollet died. Of course, in spite of every warning, the death appeared sudden when it came. She had been sitting up, and talking a little, and appearing to enjoy the air, and the food that was brought her, until two days before the end. Rochefort had driven up in the early morning as usual (he called it "only exercising the horses") to inquire after her—when he was told by the bonne, that all was over. Madame had died the night before. He did not know whether he was right, but he could not control the impulse to throw up the reins and go to the house. "I will just leave my card for Madame Arnaud," he said, "and you will ask her if I can take any message for her to M. St. Clair." He took out his pencil and wrote a few words on the back of his card, sending it up by the servant. He paced the little room to and fro, while she was gone. When he heard the door open a few minutes afterwards, and looked up, expecting to see

Lisette, he faced Madame Arnaud, pale, and with eyes red and swollen from weeping; but evidently keeping herself under strong control.

He took her hand, not able to speak, and for a moment held it, looking into her face.

"God knows if I feel for you," he said at last; "but I must not make you speak now. It would try you too much. I did not know if I was right to come in or not. Have you any message for your cousin? I suppose you would like to see him at once, to help you to arrange things, and so on."

"Yes, if you please; I should like him to come now. And ask him if he thinks 'sa tante Amélie' would come and stay with me a few days. I do not know her well, but I know she would do it for Anastase; and I cannot . . . I cannot be left alone, dans cette douleur affreuse!" Madame Arnaud seated herself on a chair, with her head turned away from where Rochefort stood, and burst out into agonized weeping.

It was terrible to have to stand there, and be able to do nothing; to see her grief, to hear her sobs; to watch her slight frame

shaken with emotion, and not to dare to speak lest he should say too much; not to dare to move towards her, lest he should clasp her to his heart.

"I will go to Anastase," he said at last, "I will bring him to you at once. It will not take the horses long. Adieu, madame."

She exerted herself to rise, to repress her weeping, and to give him her hand. Scarcely knowing what he did, he took it, and pressed it to his lips; then without another word left her. * * * * *

Until about ten days after the "enterrement," he did not go again to Auteuil. During almost every hour of that time, he longed, with a restless and craving hunger, for the sight of the woman who had so wound herself around his heart. He thought of her with an absorption, that put fever into his veins, and almost banished sleep from his brain; with a longing that grew in strength hour by hour, till it was his master,—making him its slave.

At last, one evening, when he could endure his state of suspense and banishment no longer, he took the train to Auteuil, and walked up to Madame Arnaud's house. St.

Clair's aunt was staying with her, and the two ladies were in the drawing-room together, when he went in. He sat and talked for half-an-hour or so, feeling restless and impatient; and wondering how Angélique could work so quietly at her embroidery, and look so calm and pale, while his heart beat so wildly. At last, "la tante Amélie" must have begun to feel herself "de trop," for she put down her knitting, laid it on the table, took off her spectacles and said she would go and see about some tea for monsieur. When she had left the room, there was a dead silence for several moments. Then Angèle, feeling the silence to be trying, said in a voice that struggled to be quite calm, almost cheerful,

"Did I ever show you a likeness I have of mamma, taken only a few months before she died? Would you like to see it?"

He would like very much, if finding it would give madame no trouble. No; she had it in her work-box. The work-box was opened, but the likenesses were not there. She tried her desk: no. Where, then, had she put them? Ah, she remembered; she had carried them for safety only the other

day to a drawer upstairs. But n'importe, here was one; she had put it in her locket only yesterday. She had a jet chain round her neck, with a plain jet locket attached to it, and she unfastened it, and laid it down on the table before him. Both chain and locket were warm from her neck; he lifted them up, he rose from his chair saying something about seeing the "likeness better nearer the light," but it was because he dare not let her see the trembling of his hands: felt as if she must actually hear the throbbing of his heart.

"Do you like it, monsieur? Do you think it good?" inquired Angélique, standing at a little distance from him as he looked, but so that she could see too.

"Scarcely anybody knew mamma," continued Madame Arnaud, her sweet voice beginning to falter a little; "she was not understood. She was a little cold and stiff in her manner sometimes, but she was so very good, so very kind . . . . She always thought of me before herself; from when I was a little, little girl she taught me, and loved me, and was always my companion and friend . . . and when we were poor and

in trouble—I dare say Anastase has told you something of it—she did not mind about anything, as long as I was well and happy. She was only miserable when I was . . . . and now she has left me quite alone ; I shall never, never see her, or hear her speak to me again."

He put the chain and locket down, and turned with his back to the table, leaning against it, and facing her. The tears were streaming down her face, but when she saw him look at her, she resolutely tried to control them, and said,

"But, I forget, all this cannot interest you much. I don't know why I am telling you, or making you unhappy, as I know I am—with my crying. May I have my chain back, monsieur ?" She held out her hand for it.

"If I were to ask you to let me keep it for a few hours—only till to-morrow—that I might have something you have cared for near me, would you do it?" His heart was in such tumult that he hardly knew what he said.

"Yes, if you wished it," answered Angélique at last.

"Would you give me anything I wished?"

"Almost anything, monsieur."

"Have you any trust in me—any care for me at all?"

"Ah! you know I have!"

"Enough to let me care for you?"

She did not answer him. She only looked up. But that one instant's glance was sufficient to answer him fully, and to give him the right he took—the right it would scarcely have been in man's nature not to long for, as she stood there, close before him, in her sweet grace and touching sorrow, and utter loneliness! Almost as she raised her eyes she felt herself clasped to the man's beating breast, and held there with his passionately constraining arms.

During two long loveless years he had never pressed a woman's lips to his, or felt the throbbing of a heart that loved him upon his own. He held her as if he would never let her go; he kissed her brow, her cheeks, her neck, her soft, dark, scented hair; he poured out on her, in a wild torrent, all the freed passion of his imprisoned love.

When at last he looked at her, and made

her look at him, he had forgotten that earth held anything for him but this one woman —this one woman whom he hardly knew, whom he had never yet called by her name, and who had not one memory — scarcely perhaps one belief, in common with himself. And is not this more or less in man's nature, over the whole world?

"Angélique," he said, in trembling hope and fear, "will you love me, and be my wife? I have never asked you yet."

"Your wife, monsieur?" She seemed troubled in saying it, and tried to draw herself away from him a little; but his arms were a whole man's love stronger than her frail will or resistance.

"Do not you love me enough to be my wife?"

"Yes, I love you, monsieur."

"Do you, Angélique? God bless you for saying so! But look at me as you say it."

"God knows if I do," she answered, more sadly than earnestly, and yet there was earnestness enough in her tone. "I love you with my whole, full heart!"

"And that is all I want to know," he said.

"*Is* it all?" she demanded quickly.

"Is it all? What do you mean, Angèle?"

She did not answer him. She began playing with one of the gold coins at the end of his watch-chain, while her head still rested on his breast.

"Should you be happy, Angèle, never to see me again, after I went away from here? Will you send me away?—say adieu to me now?"

"No, no! Do not leave me; do not go away. I should die if you did."

"I must go away for a time," he went on presently; "go away and not see you; but I want the right to come again for you, and make you my wife."

She began to tremble very much, and her face to grow white and agitated. Once more she made a faint effort to free herself, but he retained her.

"My darling! How can I let you go till you have answered me?"

"I cannot answer you, monsieur. I must have time to think."

"Well, how long do you want?—Till to-morrow?"

"No; I must have three—four—perhaps

five days—perhaps a week. I cannot tell. I must see Anastase, for one thing. You know he was left a sort of guardian or executor for me. You must let me see him first."

"Fifty times if you like. I will wait any time if you will kiss me again! . . . Do you want me to throw that spade-ace guinea on my chain out of the window, Angèle? It isn't worth so much looking at. And I am under six foot," he pleaded; "it won't break your neck to look up at me instead."

* * * *

When Longley called on his friend the next morning, M. Anastase was busy painting in his studio.

"Put down your hat," said St. Clair, after they had discoursed on his picture, and on indifferent subjects, for a few minutes. "We're not on ceremony, are we? There's a tolerably clean table at your right hand."

"Thanks; but I prefer not putting down my things in your studio, as a rule. Besides, I am going to breakfast at Auteuil. I only called in for five minutes."

"Ah ——!" exclaimed St. Clair, with a tone of rather surprised and not altogether satisfied interrogation, as he stopped painting, and looked into his friend's face; "c'est ça donc, ton jeu?"

"'My game'? What do you mean?"

"Diable!" returned Anastase; "nothing to offend your Royal Highness. Keep the powder dry, or we can't talk, you know. So you are going to breakfast at Auteuil, are you?" he repeated; "chez madame ma cousine?"

"Yes. Anastase, I asked your cousin yesterday if she would marry me."

"You asked Angélique yesterday if she would marry you?"

"I did. What's the matter?"

St. Clair's face had become suddenly red; now it was pale. He leant his arms over the back of a chair that stood near his painting stool, looked at his friend for some moments in silence, and then demanded—

"What did she say?"

"She has given me no answer."

"Ah!—bien," responded Anastase, with a slight tone of relief.

"And why 'bien'?"

"Oh, simply because it is rather a serious step for you to take, or for her to take, either. What would your mother say to your bringing a Frenchwoman home as your wife, and a Frenchwoman who cannot speak a word of your own language? Are you sure you would not regret it yourself, as time went on?"

"St. Clair, have you concealed anything from me about Madame Arnaud?"

"About my cousin? In what way?"

"Is she what you have represented her to me?"

Rochefort's pulses were beginning to quicken, and his breath to come hard. It was difficult to sit there without showing any sign, calm and motionless, and holding that hat before him in his two hands, while he waited to hear his sentence.

"She is more than I have ever represented her to you. There is character in her you have never seen yet. No one could be disappointed in Angèle."

"I do not mean that. Is Madame Arnaud what I have believed her to be? You know what I am asking well enough."

"As far as I know, Longley, she is as

innocent of all wrong as the Sainte Vierge herself; and I am certain she is good, and that she has heart. I would not take a million francs to deceive you about her."

Rochefort breathed again.

"She wants to see you, Anastase, before she gives me her answer."

"Oh, she does, does she? Well, I'll go there this evening. I say, Longley, did she ask you to come and see her to-day, or did you ask yourself?"

"I asked myself, of course. You don't suppose she would do it? If she had done, the probabilities are I should not have cared to go."

"Anglais que tu es!" exclaimed St. Clair. "Are you going? Well, good-bye, then. Tell her I shall come this evening. When shall you be back?"

"In three hours. I am going to Boulogne this afternoon, to meet my agent, who wants to have a talk with me about some business. Adieu."

CHAPTER VIII.

Two days after the dialogue in the studio, as Rochefort was driving on the Boulevard des Italiens, he saw St. Clair lounging along towards him on the pavement, his hands in his pockets, a cigar in his mouth, and an absent, preoccupied look on his face. Rochefort drove the horses to the side of the road, stretched out his whip, so that its point almost touched St. Clair as he came on, and spoke to him by name.

"Oh, are you there?" said Anastase, looking up with a rather startled expression. "Where are you going, or where have you been?"

"To your place, just now, and found you out. I am going to Vincennes. Will you come with me?"

"I ought not; I have a sort of engage-

ment. However, it is a temptation, and the engagement can wait. What are you going to Vincennes for?" inquired St. Clair, as he mounted up by the side of his friend.

"For the sake of the horses. They get unmanageable if they are not driven regularly. Anastase, there's something wrong with your cousin, and I can't make it out. You went to see her—what did she say to you?"

"Hasn't she told you?"

"She tells me hardly anything."

"Well, look here, Longley," said St. Clair, after some minutes' silence, "the fact is, I wash my hands of this affair. You do not quite know Angélique yet; and, I——I have very little influence over her in any way. She can be a thorough little tigress when she is once roused. She is beyond my management, and you must try and get her under yours. All I say to you is, don't marry her in a hurry. Think over it well first, or rather make her think over it well; and don't do anything without telling me first."

"Have you been saying anything to influence her against me—on account—on

account of my present position?" inquired Rochefort, with a passionate flush on his face, as he turned his eyes on his friend.

"God forbid!" ejaculated St. Clair; "what on earth should I do that for? It is simply and solely on your account that I am anxious. But don't let us talk any more about it. As I have said before, Angèle is determined to manage her own affairs on this occasion; and I will not be responsible."

After which remark, the subject was dropped.

Day after day for a week, Rochefort went up to Auteuil, and day after day found Angèle in the same inexplicable humour. She was full of charm—she was "intelligente"—"spirituelle"—she was fascinating "à rendre fou"—she behaved towards him with a tenderness that intoxicated him (for he had not tasted the draught before), and that made life away from her appear a mere weary passage of colourless hours—but she would not give him her promise to be his wife. At last one evening, when his patience was at an end, and she saw that it was—when he told her that he would leave Paris

within twenty-four hours, if she did not give him an answer. She answered, and she accepted him ; saying, when she did so, that it was only her dread of his repenting having married a Frenchwoman, and her fear of what his English relations might think of her, that had made her hesitate.

About his own present position, he had never yet said one word to her—to St. Clair had been deputed the task of informing Madame Arnaud that her lover must wait till he was himself free before he could claim her as his wife. Angélique's remark on the occasion was, "I suppose it takes some time to get a divorce in England? I hope it does."

The Sunday after she had given him her promise, Rochefort went to Auteuil in the evening, but rather later than usual. He had told Angélique the day before that he should be busy most of Sunday, and should not leave his hotel. He would come and breakfast with her on Monday morning for the last time ; on Tuesday he was to return to England. But when evening came, the temptation to go to her as usual was too strong for him. He would go then, he

thought, and not the next morning. It was always awfully hot, coming back to Paris after breakfast—evening was the best time to go.

When he reached Madame Arnaud's house, the gate was opened for him by Lisette, whose face wore, instead of its usual smile of welcome, an embarrassed and rather frightened expression.

"Is madame well?" he inquired rather hastily.

Yes, madame was quite well.

He met "madame" as he walked up the path. She was not alone; some man was walking by her side—a middle-sized, shabbily-dressed, but not very bad-looking fellow, with a black moustache, no beard, and apparently aged about forty. He had large, dull, blue eyes, which he fixed with an astonished stare, then with a rather unpleasant leer, on the Englishman, as he walked up to them, slightly lifting his hat to Madame Arnaud. Angélique turned terribly white, but she did not lose her presence of mind.

"Monsieur is a friend of my cousin Anastase St. Clair," she said, addressing the

man at her side; "he is transacting some business for me. If monsieur will have the goodness to go to the house, and to ask for my aunt, I will be with him in five minutes."

This last speech was delivered in the coolest of business tones to her lover. She and her companion passed on, and he heard no more.

A few minutes afterwards Angélique entered the salon, where "la tante Amélie" had long ago learnt not to obtrude herself when "M. Longley" called, and where, therefore, he was standing alone and waiting for her.

"What did you mean by introducing me to that man?" were his first words, rather hotly spoken, when Madame Arnaud entered, and shut the door after her.

"I was very sorry to have to do it. It was only to avoid feeling myself compromised."

"Did it matter to you what such a fellow as that, thought of you or of me?"

"One has to be careful, monsieur, in my position."

"Who was he, Angèle?"

Madame Arnaud seated herself on one of her canapés, and leaned back against the cushions. She was very much flushed, and she kept her eyelids lowered, so that her eyes were entirely hidden from her lover. Her mouth had a strange set look, and yet he could see that it trembled. She was excited, and yet evidently keeping herself in determined control.

Rochefort drew a chair close in front of her, and with his arms resting on his knees, leaned towards her, and looked fully into her face.

"Who was that man, Angélique?"

"What can it matter to you who he was?" returned Madame Arnaud, after a pause; "he was a man with whom I have business—a poor relation of my mother's—anything you like, Arthur; why should you care to know?"

He looked into her face with an expression that was at first only tender and anxious; but at last, as her silence continued, it became full of agonized dread. She could hardly endure its searching, yearning scrutiny.

"Was he any one you cared for, Angèle?"

"No—no! a thousand times no! I hate, I detest, I despise him."

"Then what right had he to be here? What can he have to do with you?"

She was silent for some minutes; but at last answered,

"He cared for me a little, once, and I suppose he thought that gave him the right. He only came to ask me if I would give him some money. Bah! . . . the wretch, the imbécile!"

Another pause.

"He was never a lover of yours, Angèle, was he?"

In using the word "amant," Rochefort said almost more than he dared; but he used the word deliberately, and with the determination to watch her face as he said it.

"No, Arthur, never—never!"

"Then, Angèle, you shall tell me what brought that man here. I have a right to know."

There was no answer; and her lover sat silent and expectant before her, waiting till she should speak. He had not to wait long. With a tone of almost defiant recklessness, it is impossible to describe, she said at last,

"Enfin! . . . ce n'était que mon mari."

"It was only your husband, madame?" He went back from her as if he had been shot. When she looked up, he was standing before her with an expression in his horror-stricken face, that made her rise with a sudden cry, and throw herself into his arms.

"You forced me to it, Arthur! I told you I would not marry you; it was because I could not. . . . Kill me if you have any love for me! I cannot bear to live; I cannot bear it!"

He had taken her in his arms, but without a word; he felt as if he held his murderess to his heart.

"I had not seen him for two years," sobbed Angélique; "I hoped he was dead! I thought perhaps God had been merciful to me, and that I should never see him again. . . . I did not mean to be wicked to you; but when I saw how you loved me, and knew it was all my own fault, I dare not tell you."

He could not speak to her; what was there left for him to say?

"I hoped he would never find me out,

and that I might love you and be your wife, where nobody knew me or could blame me! And I love you, oh, so well—oh, so dearly!—how could I bear to send you away?"

Feeling as if the life-blood were oozing from him, drop by drop, and as if his heart lay dying of the stab her hand had given it, he still held her in his arms, turned back her soft black hair, now wet with tears, with his strong and tender hand, kissed her forehead with his quivering lips. How was it possible to reproach her, while she thus poured out her love for him on his breast?

"We did not want him to find out I had any money," poor Angélique continued, when she was a little calmer, "lest he should try and take me away from home again. We moved from Tours to Bordeaux, and from Bordeaux here; all, that he might not find us out. One day I saw him when I was in Paris with mamma—it was in the Rue Vivienne. My God! I shall never forget it. He stopped and spoke to us, and we found out he knew about the money having come to us, and had been trying to find us ever since. Mamma gave him all

the money she had, and told him we lived at Sceaux, and we got away from him somehow. I never saw, or heard of him again. And we have been very happy here till now!"

"Yes, till now," Rochefort repeated. "And now, Angélique, that you have ruined my happiness, and your own—what are you going to do?"

"Do? . . . Do you know what he said to me to-night?" pursued Madame Arnaud, as she raised her flushed and tear-stained face; "he says he wants to come and live with me again, and that he has a right—and he will do it!"

"That man wants to live with you?" repeated Rochefort, with an accent of indescribable horror. He added, a moment afterwards, with his teeth almost set, "By God, he shall not do it, Angèle! He shall never so torture you!"

"He says I am his wife, and that I have no cause for separating myself from him. He says he never treated me cruelly or badly; and that he has left me free long enough. He has sworn that, unless I let him come here, he will make my life mise-

rable—tell terrible falsehoods about me—blacken my character to everybody!"

Angélique rose as she spoke, and for a few moments paced the room in an excitement of distress and terror that it was pitiable to see.

"He *cannot* make you live with him, Angèle. There is more than one escape for you, from such degradation and misery as that."

She did not seem to hear, or if she heard, she did not understand him. She turned suddenly round, and threw herself upon his breast.

"Oh, take me away from him!" she said; "take me anywhere—anywhere on earth, so that I am with you, and away from him!—I don't care what becomes of me. There is no one on earth to care for me, but you!"

For a long time he did not utter a word—for so long, that she was the first to speak again. . . .

"Arthur," she sobbed, with her sweet French intonation of the name by which she had always called him, "are you not going to speak to me? I only want you to say

you will take care of me, and love me, and not leave me to die of grief? Cannot I be your wife, away from France, even though he is alive? Le bon Dieu could not be angry with me!"

"My darling!" burst at last in agony from Rochefort's lips, "do not tempt me so! You do not know what you do!"

"Am I wicked?" she asked, looking at him with eyes, whose love, and misery, and dread he could hardly bear to see; "I do not mean to be! you must forgive me if I am. But in what way am I that man's wife, Arthur?—what right has he to me?—what part have we in each other? He made me marry him, and I hate and despise him. I shall never, never as long as I live be anything to him—and how could it be wrong to be yours, as I can be—as I ought to be! for I love you more than my life—more than heaven—and you love me!"

In the tempted and throbbing heart on which she leant, there was going on a contest to the death—a fight between the angel of God and the strongest demon of hell; and the angel was panting, struggling, fainting, and almost overborne! For one

moment the devil of the man's passion rose supreme, and almost waved his wicked flag of triumph; but the next—with one last, desperate struggle, he was hurled back—hurled back, vanquished, lifeless—struck to death: and the angel of the Right stood victor, but on as awfully contested a ground as ever yet was stained with the blood of a man's strong, and suffering, and loving heart.

"My darling!—my own Angélique!—I cannot tell you that I have the shadow of any right to hold you as my wife! I cannot take you away with me. I dare not be guilty of the sin that has been the curse of my own life."

She sobbed as if her heart were breaking with her grief. Still clinging with her arms about his neck, she said in broken sentences—

"You would have loved me!—I know you would! We might have been so happy. Oh! is God so cruel to us both as to wish you to leave me now?"

* * * * *

But there is a point at which the pen re-

fuses the office of telling more of agony endured; of temptation wrestled against;—of a crown of thorns, won in bitter tears, and worn with every cruel point pressing pitilessly to the flesh.

For ever, here, the search is vain; but in Heaven, where sin and suffering are known no more,—will a balm, such as no place on earth can yield; no words of human comfort, and no full fruition of other hopes, afford—be found at last for that most hopeless, and most unutterable of all sorrows—the total and enforced relinquishing of love that has wound itself round every living fibre of the heart?

For hours after he left her, Rochefort walked along the lighted Paris quais, in sight of the broad, still, flowing river; with moonlight on its breast, and unrippled by breeze or motion. Oh, the tempest in the heart, which sent up its bitter cry to God!—the God, who often in our worst distresses, appears to us so far, and cold, and strong, and pitiless!

His baffled and tempted love had gained in the last few hours, a giant strength. It

absorbed, it overwhelmed, it maddened him. The entire force of his nature, roused at last, had risen to its full strength, and passion, and power; and the object which he so madly loved could not be his, without sin, from which every sense of his soul revolted. I say of his *soul:* his *heart* did not revolt from the thought of any way, by any right, holding the form of his Angélique to his breast, and calling her his own. God, who knows all, and who alone knows of what suffering humanity is capable, knows how that strong will fought against the power of its overmastering love, and of its terrible temptation, through the long hours of that night.

Oh, the divine cup of happiness that was held to his thirsting lips, and which he might not drink; the heaven that had been laid at his very feet, and which he was forced to spurn—the rest from every present sense of pain, which had been offered him on the heart of her he loved, and which he could not take—the blessedness of the haven of which he had caught a glimpse, and which he might not enter!

Again and again, he tried to force her

image from its clinging hold about his heart —only to feel it nestle back; nestle close—close—close, as he would have given all the earth, in that wild hour, to have taken her —taken her to his yearning heart, and within his shielding arms!

* * * * *

Late the next evening, a gentleman presented himself with a rather hurried, anxious aspect, at the Louvre, and went up to Mr. Longley's rooms. Mr. Longley was ill, his man said; he had not been out all day.

St. Clair found him walking up and down the 'salon'; but so altered that he would hardly have known him. His table was strewed with papers; the whole room in great confusion; the windows wide open, but the shutters closed, so that there was but little light in the room; and from outside boomed in the dull, low thunder of the streets, as the incessant carriages rolled past.

"I would have come to you before," said Anastase, speaking with effort, and in an unnatural tone of voice, "but I had a note this afternoon from Auteuil, and I have been up there. Do you know what Angèle has done?"

"*Done?* What do you mean?"

"Nothing bad; it's all right enough; but I'll tell you afterwards. I want to know about all this horrid business first. Are you going to challenge me, or kill me right off, or only throw me up for good?"

"St. Clair, you have behaved to me like a coward and a traitor."

"If I wasn't sorry for you, I would make you remember calling me a coward, Longley. But this isn't the time for quarrelling. How could I know you would fall in love with my cousin?"

"What right had you to tell me that Angélique's husband was dead? Answer me that!" exclaimed Rochefort, fiercely.

"I didn't tell you he was dead, to deceive *you* especially. It was what we said to everybody—what she wishes to be said to everybody. And upon my honour, I didn't know that he wasn't; neither did she. I hoped he was, for her own sake."

"Didn't you know that I loved her?"

"I knew that you very often took the horses down there, but you told me precious little else. If you hadn't been so reserved, this might have been avoided perhaps.

When I did go to her, I found she was yours, 'à la vie, à la mort,' and hadn't the courage to let you know we had deceived you. She was as illogical as a woman always is, and though she didn't want to do you or herself any injury, she hadn't the firmness to give you up. She said if she could only send Lionneta certain amount of money every year—and promise him to do it; she was sure she could bind him over not to betray her, or cause her any trouble, if she were once out of the country."

Rochefort walked for about five minutes up and down the room without speaking.

"Poor child!" he said at last,—"Anastase—don't let that fellow get hold of her, if you can help it."

"He never will. You can trust her for that. Longley, I want to ask you something. Why on earth did you give Angélique up, since the poor little girl loved you so passionately? She would have sacrificed anything for you, if it came to that."

He knew it only too well; and his heart gave one great throb, and then was still. St. Clair went on, clearing his throat as he spoke,

"She has no one left on earth to care about her, except myself—and I can do little or nothing for her—and she is indifferent to me, as you know; except as a sort of brother, adviser, friend, call it what you will. She will be a miserable woman, left, as you are leaving her. She saw tante Amélie after you were gone last night—and seemed almost 'folle.' I am only thankful she has done nothing worse than 'se fourrer' within the walls of a convent."

"Will she be miserable, do you think? I have had no time to know all that she is—or that she can feel. I have had to thrust her from me, just when she was growing to my heart," said Rochefort.

"She will be very miserable, I know it. Angélique is not the woman to console herself for disasters by any means that are compromettants. She is too good; she has too much réligion. The whole thing seems to me terrible," continued St. Clair in a desperate sort of way, "and I could blow my brains out for a fool, when I think that I have led you into it all. I ought never to have taken you there. God knows if I am

sorry I did it." After a silence of several minutes, he went on again.

"I hope I have as much sense of the respect due to such a little treasure as my cousin—as any man—even as yourself; but, for the life of me, I cannot conceive how you have found it in your heart to give her up, when she loves you as she does. There is nothing de plus sot, than to try and force oneself on a woman who repulses one, and to whom any sacrifice of oneself is worthless; but when une petite femme, simply adores one,—and when there is no living being to whom she owes a duty—where on earth does one find the force to push her aside and say, 'Je ne veux pas de toi?'"

"For God's sake, St. Clair, stop talking to me. Do you think I am made 'of the blood of saints and martyrs?'" said Rochefort, almost writhing in his misery.

"I don't want to pain you," Anastase went on, after a certain time given to reflection. "I only can't see the earthly good of both you and Angélique suffering as you are doing, and I feel as if I had been to blame, and am rending my brains to im-

agine some sort of reparation. Why cannot you let her come with you to England? You can't settle her at Riverswood, unfortunately; but Lionnet—that's his real name, and hers—won't live for ever. . . . You could have done what you liked with her. She would only have said—as all the women do, that it was a 'marriage in the sight of God,' and she would have been right, pardie!"

"And if I had made her my mistress, what then?" asked Rochefort at last, turning on him.

"I don't understand you," said Anastase.

"Where would you have had me live?"

"Live — how should I know? But I suppose you must live at Riverswood."

"Most of my time, at the least; and Madame Arnaud——?"

"Where you liked. That is none of my business. If I loved a woman, and had money like you, I could make a home for her somewhere."

"Yes, it would be easy enough, if I chose to do it. But I am not going to do it. So there the subject ends."

"Well, Arthur, I can understand no

one, with as much feeling as you have, being as hard and impracticable in action. I don't believe you are right, even theoretically, in your severe morale, and I am certain you are wrong towards yourself."

"To myself I may be—for the time being—God knows. But should I have done no wrong to Madame Arnaud, if I had sacrificed her to my brutal love of self?"

St. Clair did not speak for some moments. He was more moved than he cared to show, and yet he remained totally out of sympathy with the man whose chivalric notions of honour he considered so exaggerated and mis-placed, and now almost cruel.

"I assure you I appreciate your feelings towards Angélique. They are very honourable and unselfish. No one belonging to her could feel otherwise than that you had treated her very honourably," said St. Clair at last.

"Thanks," said Rochefort, in a slightly ironical tone. "It is, of course, an infinite relief to me to have your opinion. I am fully aware how thoroughly you appreciate my motives and my course of action, at all times."

"That is the most ungenerous speech you ever made," said St. Clair, almost angrily, and with perfect truth. "Why do you speak so to me? What on earth am I doing or saying now to incense you?"

After a pause of some minutes, Rochefort answered—"I spoke like a brute I know. . . But I feel as if I had been hunted to death, Anastase, and was 'going to ground' at last."

Looking up, St. Clair saw the irrepressible tears come into his eyes.

"For God's sake, don't talk in that way, old fellow. I can't bear to hear it. You look fit for nothing. What have you been at all day?"

"I don't know. Oh, seeing about going off, and giving directions, and writing one or two letters, and so on."

"Have you had anything to eat or drink?"

"No; nothing to speak of."

"Will you have some brandy now, if I give you some?"

"Perhaps I'd better. The brandy 's on that marble slab; I had some this morning. St. Clair, you haven't any divorce laws in France, have you?"

"No. The Code Napoléon gave us the same liberty that you have in England, that of suing for divorce on the grounds of infidelity or cruelty; but the law was abolished by the Bourbons, and we have never regained it. You can have nothing but a judicial separation 'de corps et de biens.' If you want to marry again, you must produce a certificate of the death of the husband or wife."

Rochefort sat with his arms on the table, and his head bent on to his hands. St. Clair continued presently—

"The fact of the matter really is, Longley, as Angèle says, that the man would never trouble her if he were given enough to live on. He's not a spendthrift, and he's not a villain. He only threatened her in the way I hear he did last night because he wants to go back to her. I firmly believe if he were convinced that she would never have him, he would set her free, and never trouble her again, but make himself comfortable; that is, of course, if he had the wherewithal given him to be comfortable on. If it is a case of leaving her for ever, or of marrying her, why don't you risk marrying her in

England? The fellow would never do anything to harm her, and he cannot harm you. There are but two living creatures who know what Angèle has told you—myself and Madame St. Clair; and you can trust us both. It is positively the insanest farce to consider that bête as Angélique's husband. For the sake of a stupid 'poltron,' whom you despise, and whom she will never look on, probably, for the rest of her life, you actually ruin her happiness and your own, and think you are doing the right thing!"

St. Clair had begun this speech with a sort of reckless desire to hear the last Rochefort could say. He was only half in earnest —not as much as half—but before he finished, he had talked himself into thinking he meant what he said. When he actually ended up, he did mean it, and felt as if he had just propounded a highly moral —nay, almost a religious sentiment.

"And you think that magnificent piece of special pleading has dulled me for one moment to the fact, that if I married Madame Arnaud on the terms you suggest, my children by her would be illegitimate,

and the heir of Riverswood—if she gave me one—a *bastard?*" returned Rochefort, with the hot blood of his proud nature and his proud race, colouring his whole face and neck as he spoke. There was a pause.

"Very well. Then you give her up, that's all," said St. Clair, finally; "of course it's no affair of mine. I only thought I owed you what reparation I could, after the *embrouillement* I've led you into, and for which I'm confoundedly sorry. . . . There, I'd better give you that now," he added, throwing a small sealed letter on to the table as he spoke, "but I wanted to have a talk with you first."

The note was directed in Angélique's hand-writing, and was on thin, soft paper, scented with the "Parfum de Paradis," she was fond of using. Her lover lighted the little wax taper of his inkstand, and took it up with trembling hands. St. Clair walked to one of the windows, pushed a shutter back, and looked out into the street, whistling as he stood.

"Cher ami," (it began),

"Je vous écris pour vous dire un adieu éternel.

"Je vais me consacrer à Dieu—à ce Dieu qui n'a pas voulu m'accorder le bonheur qui aurait fait toute la joie de ma vie. Je ne vous blâme pas; mais je vois que vous ne m'avez pas aimée, comme je vous ai aimé; sans cela vous ne m'auriez pas quittée comme vous l'avez fait hier, en me disant que vous ne me reverriez plus! Ah, mon Dieu! si les souffrances de la vie dans ce monde sont si dures, je ne veux plus y rester; je tâcherai de trouver le calme, et le repos, dans le sanctuaire où l'amour et la douleur ne peuvent plus venir me troubler. Soyez heureux! si vous priez, priez quelquefois pour moi, et sachez, que dans un pays loin de vous, prie le cœur que vous avez rejeté mais que le bon Dieu acceptera tel qu'il est!

"ANGÉLIQUE.

"Souvenéz-vous toujours cependant, que je ne vous blâme pas! Il aurait été peut-être impossible de vous revoir sans trop vous aimer! Adieu, donc—adieu!"

"What does she say?" asked St. Clair, after waiting some time for his friend to speak, "I only mean, of course—does she tell you about the convent?"

"Has she gone into a convent? I supposed it meant that. There, you can read it," said Rochefort, pushing the letter towards him, as St. Clair came up to the table.

Anastase read it through slowly.

"It is a cruel letter, Arthur. I wish she had not written it."

"She doesn't know what she says. She only half realizes what it would mean—my 'accepting her heart,' as she calls it—I think she has a sort of ideal notion of some sort. . . . God knows what. Do you notice this?—'that I couldn't have loved her as she loves me, or I should not have left her in the way I did'?"

"Elle n'y comprend rien," answered St. Clair.

"And here, at the end," said Rochefort, with a sort of weary tone and gesture, drawing the sheet towards him, and pointing to the last sentence before she had signed her name, 'le cœur que tu as rejeté.' —"My poor little darling! 'The heart that I have rejected,' indeed! The words have gone through me like a bullet."

He got up, and leaned his back against

the mantel-piece, with a hand thrust into each pocket, and an air of dreary lassitude that said more than words.

"She thinks I am suffering nothing to what she is, I dare say. How little women understand one, after all; and yet how madly one loves them! And she says 'si vous priez.' Does she think, then, Anastase, that Protestants never pray?"

"She doesn't know how they pray. How can she? I dare say she has never spoken to a Protestant till she spoke to you."

"Isn't it an exquisite little letter, though?" said Rochefort, presently. "God bless her! And you see she half thinks she has been severe on me, and puts at the end 'Souvenez-vous cependant, que je ne vous blâme pas!' and that's all I can take away with me to 'heal me of my grievous wound!' Good God! I don't know what I am to do with myself!"

St. Clair had to swallow a rising in his throat before he could speak.—"My dear old fellow," he said, "I hope you'll be all right again in a month or two. I shall never forgive myself if you are not. I wish you'd told me long ago it was 'au

sérieux,' all this fancy for poor Angèle. I saw she had bewitched you, but I never knew till I went to speak to her that it was as bad as this. I swear to you I didn't." Neither of them spoke again for some time.

"Will she stay in this convent?" asked Rochefort at last, as he stood before the window, looking out in an absent listless sort of way.

"She'd better stay in it for some time, I think," answered Anastase; "she will be safest there. She left a letter for me with instructions about her money, and house, and so on. She wishes everything to be sold up—writes exactly as if she were going to be a nun for life, poor little girl! You may think the state I found poor tante Amélie and Lisette in, when I went up there."

"When did she go?"

"She went quite early this morning; let herself out of the house, and the letters were found on her dressing-table. 'Tante Amélie,' said she had put everything into perfect order in her room, so she must have been up all night. She left a box or two, packed, to be sent after her."

"Then you know where she is gone?"

"Yes; au Convent des ——. She told me in her letter."

There was a long silence.

"When are you off, Arthur?" inquired St. Clair, as he rose to go.

"To-morrow night—from Calais."

"Horrid boats, those mail steamers," remarked Anastase, not knowing what to say.

"Yes; horrible."

"Well, I'll come in and see you before you go. There's nothing I can do for you, is there?"

"No, thanks, nothing. Good-night."

"Good-night."

CHAPTER IX.

When Nora left St. Pierre, she was driven to the station—the Gare de Paris—without her having formed one idea of where she was to go, or if she went to Paris, what she should do there, without money, without friends, and with feeble health and strength. At the station she asked for a few minutes' time before taking her ticket, and seating herself on her box in the grande salle, took her purse out, and counted over what money she had left. Then she went up to the booking-office, and made inquiries of the clerk there, as to how much it would cost her to reach England; for as far as she had had any idea or plan whatever in her mind, since the time of her going up to her room on the previous miserable night, it had been to go back to her own country, and

seek for some situation, no matter what, at the place where she should first land. She had begun to have a craving longing to be somewhere nearer "home," though what she meant by "home" she dare scarcely confess even to her own heart.

The ticket-clerk was complaisant enough to make out what it would cost her to reach England, by Boulogne or Dieppe; and she learnt, with unspeakable sickness of heart, that she had barely enough money in the world to take her to the French coast. Entirely unaccustomed as she had been, ever since her marriage, to any sort of economy, or calculation of expenses, she had (although believing herself to be rigidly careful) spent most of the money received from M. Höffner as soon as it was given. In her now pitiable strait, she asked to have her box taken care of for a few hours, and set off walking to a certain "place," from which she could take an omnibus which passed the suburban road, or street, in which Mdlle. Picard resided.

It was a street of large, dirty-white, and rather dilapidated-looking buildings, with shops underneath, and little balconies filled

with flowers before most of the dingily-shuttered upper windows. Mdlle. Picard was just finishing her breakfast, consisting of an excellent salade de pommes de terres, bread, and wine, when Nora presented herself at the door of her little "logement," on the first floor of one of these same houses.

"Mon Dieu! madame, what is the matter?" exclaimed the French lady, with real alarm and anxiety expressed on her face and in her tone. "What have you come to tell me?"

Nora sat down, and told her everything; told her the whole miserable story, from first to last, and then burst out into a violent fit of crying.

Good Mdlle. Picard was much shocked, and exceedingly distressed. She hurried to her cupboard, and prepared what one might call a "stiff glass" of "eau sucrée à la fleur d'oranger," and forced Nora to drink it, uttering what words of encouragement and consolation she could, meanwhile. Mdlle. Picard was a very plain woman, who dressed herself with but slight regard to appearances, and had but a limited knowledge or experience of life and the great

world; but she was kind-hearted; she had sense, intelligence, a standard of morality, and much natural benevolence. She had also some determination and energy of character, and she was a good and sincere follower of her own creed. And let it be understood that a Frenchwoman who both works and prays well; who believes from her soul in her church and her curé; who fulfils her religious "offices" with faith and fervour, and yet who does not believe that all Protestants will be damned, is a very good sort of woman to know and to live with, and beats out and out, in piety and pity, many another who carries her head much higher, and holds, as a positive article of religious faith, that all Roman Catholics whatsoever are dangerous and superstitious bigots.

Mdlle. Picard had in her bed-room a pretty little plaster-of-Paris figure of the Virgin and child, with a shell-shaped font or well beneath, in which to hold water, and in this font the good and hard-working woman placed whatever snowdrops, violets, or roses—indeed, whatever spray or head of fragrant blossom—was given her throughout

the year, by friends or pupils. And at this little shrine, with its little altar or table underneath, she said her prayers devoutly, morning and night; and would any lonely and hard-working woman be worse for doing the same? if only she remembered, "Making not flesh her arm," to Whom it is all prayers and thanks must go!

"What are you going to do, madame?" inquired Mdlle. Picard, when she had seated her visitor in state at one end of her little chintz-covered canapé, and taken the place at the other end herself. "Have you any acquaintances in France?"

"No, mademoiselle, none at all. I have come to ask you whether you could tell me of any 'bureaux de placement' in X——, where there was any chance of my finding some situation? It is so absolutely necessary I should look out for something at once!"

"Mais, ma pauvre dame, you have not the strength for any situation. I do not, I assure you, know how to advise you."

"I thought," continued Nora, her heart sinking at these words, "that though in one way it is worse for me to stay here than

anywhere else, on the other hand, if I told you all my story, you might possibly be so kind as to give me 'des renseignements,' if I found any situation, and could apply to you. You see it would be so very hard in Paris, or elsewhere, to find anything to do, without giving some sort of reference. Don't you think it would ?"

"Mais, chère dame," replied Mdlle. Picard, after a little reflection, "have you never thought of embracing our religion, and of ending all your difficulties, and atoning for your fault—excuse me, dear madame, for mentioning it—by entering a convent ? It seems to me that in your position, I should long to do it. My 'confesseur' was breakfasting here only yesterday morning. I happened to mention you quite accidentally, and he said, 'Une Anglaise ! et une Protestante ! Que je voudrais une fois la voir, pour la convertir à la vraie foi !' "

Nora was silent.

"Would you not see 'mon père,' if I sent to ask him to come to you ? One ought to have spiritual consolation in troubles such as yours, madame !"

God knows if the unhappy woman she

addressed did not think so too. But the idea of a conventual life had never assimilated itself to Nora's character and tastes, and never would.

"I want so very much to earn money enough to take me back to England," she said. "I think I should be happier, and perhaps better in health there, no matter how poor I was, or how hard I had to work."

The good French lady was moved, and applied her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Mon Dieu," she said, "c'est qu'il y a du chagrin dans ce monde! But, my dear madame," she added a minute afterwards, "tell me if you have breakfasted? Only say 'non,' and I will prepare you an omelette on this little 'machin' of mine in less than two minutes."

"I have indeed, Mdlle. Picard. Thank you very much. No, I could not eat anything. Mademoiselle, what do you think I had better do? I have not money enough to reach England. I should not mind what I did. I would be a servant till I had earned enough to take me home."

"But, madame, you have no strength to be a servant. Attendez, however," she

added presently ; " I have an idea for you. I have half an hour to spare, and you shall come with me to my mother, and we will talk things over a little."

Madame Picard, who was the wife of a " liquoriste," lived in the next house to the one in which her daughter had her little " appartement." She was a stout, homely-looking little woman, and at this early hour of the morning was attired in a white frilled night-cap, a grey bed-gown, and an old grey petticoat. She smiled very pleasantly, however, when she saw her daughter and " Madame Anna," and ushered them into a little back parlour, looking upon the garden of the " carré," where she introduced the latter to her invalid daughter, Hortense, who had suffered for years from an internal complaint, and who had just come home from Plombières. Of Plombières Mademoiselle Hortense was full, and she entertained her guest with a very lively account of the life there, the air, the company, the scenery, &c. ; while her mother and elder sister sustained a confab in the former's bed-room.

They were absent about a quarter of an

hour. Then Mdlle. Picard re-entered alone, and, taking a chair by Nora's side, began in a business-like tone, "Ecoutez, Madame Anna! My mother is acquainted with the wife of the coiffeur, three doors off, who has now on her top story a little room to let, vacant by the departure of the young man who rented it to Montpellier. It is most fortunate; he has only just gone, and my mother says she is sure she could get it for you on very low terms—next to nothing—for a week or two. The lady would do it to oblige us. Only, if by chance any other 'locataire' should present himself to take the room for a longer term, you would be obliged to give it up."

"I hope I should not want it for long," replied poor Nora, faintly.

"Oh, no; I don't suppose you would. But of course we can get it much cheaper for you, if you will take the chance of being turned out. And Mdme. C—— is very obliging. You will find it a nice little room, with placards and so on; and there is a convenient little cupboard for coals and wood on the landing outside. You will be able to do the little bit of cooking you require yourself. Will this suit you, madame, en attendant mieux?"

"Thank you; it will do very well indeed. I am much obliged to you and Mdme. Picard."

"And we shall be always near you, to prevent your being dull," put in Mademoiselle Hortense with a good-natured smile, "and I am often very glad of company, for I can do so little in the house."

"And you will hear Thérèse's piano if you keep your window open," added Madame Picard; "that will be a little distraction for you. Mais, tout de même, ma bonne dame, I hope you will soon succeed in placing yourself—that will be the best of all. My daughter is going now to direct you to some 'bureaux' in X——. Adieu, madame, au plaisir de vous revoir!"

When the two ladies were walking along in the direction of one of the 'bureaux' afore-named, Mademoiselle Picard said, "Do not, if you please, Madame Anna, say or write a word to anyone—n'importe qui—at St. Pierre about your having come to us. It might be as much as my own and my sister's places there are worth, especially if it was known we had befriended you at all. I shall say nothing about it, of course. I hope you will soon succeed in placing

yourself, as my mother says. Seulement, du courage, chère dame!"

"You are very kind to me, Mademoiselle Picard; I do not know what I should have done without you!"

"Oh, par exemple, madame!" exclaimed the good French lady; "but, à propos, will you come and dine with me this evening at seven o'clock? You will see what a nice little dinner I shall cook you. I do all my own cooking, madame. But I cannot, unfortunately, ask you to spend the evening with me, as I have a pupil—a young clerk in one of the warehouses, who comes to me for lessons in grammar and composition every other evening; and this is one of his evenings. Well, madame, now adieu. Yes—down that street to the end, and then the turn to the left; and it is the fifth house; Madame Trompeuse, second étage, right hand passage, name on the door. Don't be discouraged at the appearance of her 'bureau.' It is not very clean, and she is not very clean; but there are places to be got there sometimes. You will easily find your way from there to the other places I have written down for you. Have you

got the paper all right? Bien.—Au revoir then, madame."

* * * *

Nora lived for ten days in the little room, just "so fortunately" vacated by the young man who had gone to Montpellier. Here she cooked her little meals, mended her clothes, slept or stayed awake at night, swept her brick floor, and made her bed. From here she went out after "places," and here she returned day after day, footsore and weary, and in the evening counted out how many francs were left her of her little store.

One day, as she sat at her dinner, of "soup maigre," an egg, and a piece of bread, Madame C—— knocked at the door, and on being told to enter, showed in a young man who had come, she said, to look at the room, but would not déranger madame more than a moment. The young fellow was very polite; he took off his hat, bowed, and made his excuses; but Nora thought him troublesomely long in his investigations, particularly as she stood up by her little table while he went through them, tired as she was. No; the room was too small, the

young man thought, and besides, he preferred a front view, even if he had to mount "six étages" for it. Merci; he would not trouble madame further. And then the two went away.

The next evening, about eight o'clock as Nora was washing up the "vaisselle" she had had in use during the day (Madame C—— and Madame Picard, between them, had lent her a couple of plates, a cup and saucer, a glass, knife and fork, saucepan, "cruche" and so on); a very low and very gentle rap came to the door; and in some surprise, for it resembled no rap of Madame C——'s or of any member of the Picard family, Nora went to the door and opened it. She was confronted by the young man who had been to see the room the day before.

"Ah, mademoiselle," said he, lifting his hat; "I am perfectly ashamed to disturb you again, but will you kindly inform me if I dropped here last night a little ring? It is only a narrow gold one, and of little value, but it is too large for my finger, and I must have drawn it off with my glove."

"Monsieur can look if he likes," returned

Nora, as she retreated indifferently towards her little table, and recommenced her business of washing-up; "I have seen no ring, but I have not swept my room to-day. Monsieur will have the goodness to leave the door open," she added, as she glanced in that direction, and saw the door gradually swinging to on its hinges; "c'est qu'il fait chaud ce soir."

"Il fait très chaud, mademoiselle," returned the young fellow, as he spied about on the floor in every direction for the ring he had never either possessed or lost; "est-ce que mademoiselle ne sort pas quelquefois le soir, lors qu'il fait si chaud dedans?"

"Monsieur will have the goodness to call me 'madame,'" said Nora, an indignant flush beginning to mount to her cheeks; "and if monsieur has not found 'sa bague' yet, it is very certain it is not here. It must have been dropped in the streets."

"Peste!" exclaimed the young man raising himself, and beginning to feel in all his pockets; "où diable est donc cette bague? Mon Dieu, mademoiselle! pardon, 'madame' j'aurais dû dire—it must, as you say, have dropped in the streets. Now that I think

of it, I took off my glove in the Rue —— where I bought some cigars. Madame lives all alone then in this little mansarde?" he inquired, as he moved towards the door, and took hold of the handle. He was not an impertinent-mannered young fellow at all, though his whole visit was a piece of exquisitely planned impertinence. He was tall, handsome, and pleasant-looking; with plenty of curly black hair, and a rather graceful way with him, as all young Franchmen who are not overdone with fat have. But Nora felt as if a snake had suddenly unfolded its coils in her little room, and she answered with flashing eyes and raised voice, as she looked full at the intruder,

"Have the goodness, monsieur, to go out at that door, and leave me. Monsieur had no right to enter, and now as he has not found his 'bague' he can go."

"And madame is quite sure that I may not, even for two little minutes, visit her again?" persisted the young man, in no way discomposed.

"If you do not go away this moment, I will call Madame C——!" exclaimed

Nora, putting down her plate, and beginning to wipe her hands on her apron.

"I will not think of giving madame that trouble," returned he, not unpleasantly; "I will not think of obtruding myself another moment on her notice. It would be inexcusable in me, as my presence is so entirely disagreeable to mademoiselle—diable! madame, je voudrais dire. But madame will not blame me for telling her that her 'beauté angélique' has made its effect on my heart," and he placed his hand over the organ referred to, "her image will remain there many days. Adieu donc, madame." He made a very polite bow to her at the door, of which she took not the slightest notice; and then departed, singing gaily to himself as he descended the stairs.

"Mademoiselle Picard," said Nora the next morning to her friend, in a tone of desperation, "I must find something to do. I will take the very next situation I hear of that I have strength for, if I have to work for a franc a week. I shall soon die; and then it will not matter." And she burst out crying.

"Allons, allons," said Mdlle. Picard,

with tears in her own eyes, "you must not lose courage like this. Wait only two days more, and see if something does not turn up. And if it does not, Madame Anna, I will tell you what I will do for you."

"You do for me? Oh, I ought not to let you do anything. I have been trouble enough to you already. I had better try and creep away somewhere and die. What is there left for me to live for?"

"Hush, hush! Now, listen to what I was going to say. I have a little money, and I know I can trust you. I will lend you the money to take you to England; and then, when you are there and with your friends, you can send it me back. I know there are ways of doing it, though I don't know exactly the best way. You will find out that."

"Mdlle. Picard, I cannot go back to my parents, if you mean that. I would almost rather die."

"But, my dear Madame Anna, you must, if you cannot live anywhere else."

"Then I pray God to send me something to do, that I may not be forced to it," exclaimed Nora, in despair. "But no; nothing

could force me to it. I would become a Roman Catholic, and go into a convent first."

"Well, my child, then, if 'le bon Dieu' sends you no employment, you may be sure that it is because He has heard what you have just said, and is going to convert you, and bring you to the true faith, and the true Church. And that will be far happier for you than anything else."

It was decreed, however, that the fold of the true Church should never receive this especial "wandering sheep." Another fate was reserved for her.

On the morning of the tenth day after she had taken possession of her little room, there came a decisive and very hurried rap at Nora's door. She opened it, looking—in her pale and now very worn beauty, with a white handkerchief tied round her neck, to save the wearing of a collar, and a black stuff dress of simple cut and fashion (for Mdlle. Picard had advised the most stringent simplicity as regarded dress)—like a shadow of Marie Antoinette.

"May I come in, Madame Anna?" inquired Mdlle. Picard, entering as she

spoke. "I have only ten minutes, for it is one of my St. Pierre mornings, as you know. Well, I believe I have heard of something that will suit you at last."

"Oh, chère mademoiselle!" Poor Nora clasped her hands and sat down, unable to say another word.

It appeared upon explanation that Mdlle. Picard had had a letter that morning from her brother's wife, the brother being a "commis voyageur" in a large mercantile house at Y——; and the letter stated that Madame Lambert, the wife of M. Picard's employer, had just lost her needle-woman, or lingère, and was in great want of another to take her place. She had asked young Madame Picard to look out for her; and Madame Picard, being anxious to please her, was doing her best in that direction, and thought that, as Hortense knew so many people in X——, and went into so many families, she would be a good person to apply to. It was not an easy place to fill, because so few good lingères chose to be resident in a family. Madame Lambert had heard of nobody yet.

"Now, you know you can work beauti-

fully, Madame Anna," said Mademoiselle Picard, in conclusion, "and it will not be a very fatiguing position."

"I should like to go at once," answered Nora, trembling between hope and fear, "but I should like you to write to the lady, and tell her everything about me, calling me Madame Osborne, please. Don't conceal anything. I could never bear to go through the misery again I went through at St. Pierre."

"Well, it is perhaps the best way," said Mademoiselle Picard, after a moment's reflection; "I do not suppose it will matter much, in the way I shall put it. I will take care not to do you much harm."

"Do you know anything of Madame Lambert, mademoiselle?" inquired Nora.

"Nothing in the world, mon enfant. But all the same; I have very little doubt I shall get you the place. I will write to my sister by return of post. Now I must hurry off. And by-the-bye, madame, my mother invites you to dinner 'chez elle' this evening."

"Madame Picard is very kind. I shall be very happy to go."

"I shall be there too. And look here, madame, I have brought you a little piece of 'galantine de veau' for your breakfast. I had some given to me, and it is very good. Adieu, à ce soir.'"

Nora ran out after her on to the landing.

"Mademoiselle," she said, "please don't describe me as a lady, or perhaps I shall not get the place. Only say I was nursery governess, and helped madame with the work. Say I can work and mend well, and that the position will suit me quite well."

And for the next two days and nights her heart beat and her head ached with anxiety lest, by any miserable chance, she should not gain the enviable position of needle-woman in this family of whom she knew nothing, or lest she should be too late in her application.

Two days after Mademoiselle Picard had despatched her letter, an answer was received from her sister-in-law, saying that Madame Lambert would be glad for the young English person to come at once. She would have a good room to sit in, and a bed-room to herself, and she should breakfast with madame and the young ladies.

Her dinner should be brought to her in her room ; and after dinner her time was her own. The work-women madame had employed hitherto "had always eaten with the servants," but the young English person should not be required to do it, as she had been in a superior position.

"Well, do you accept, madame?" inquired Mademoiselle Picard.

"Certainly. I am thankful to accept. When may I go ?"

"Directly, Louise says. There is the letter. And now get your box packed ; and as I pass near the station to-day, I will go in, and find out about the trains for you."

CHAPTER X.

Madame Lambert was a woman of about five-and-forty, very young-looking, passionately fond of society, lively, generous, and kind-hearted, liberal almost to extravagance, and the mother of five children, three of whom were daughters. Her husband was an Englishman, not yet completely "Francisé." There was a resident English governess for the three girls. The duty of the needle-woman in this establishment was to mend the torn things of the whole family, to do as much plain work as she could, to alter and re-trim madame's dresses and bonnets, and to attend her at her toilette, for she kept no regular maid. Fortunately for Nora, it was the duty of the femme-de-chambre to attend her when she came home from her parties.

Of the young ladies Nora saw very little. They were girls of from twelve to sixteen, and were made to work hard at their lessons, English fashion. They also rode on horseback, bathed in cold water, and were practised in calisthenics. They had a dancing master, or, rather, went to a dancing class; they had a music master, a drawing master, and an Italian master. The eldest was very plain, and by no means a favourite with her mother. She was the most English of the family: the middle one was a fair-haired, stout, and rather stolid Saxon, with great musical talent; the youngest was a dark, regular-featured, black-browed, little French beauty, and the pet of the family. The eldest son, M. Adolphe, went to business every day with his father; the second son was being educated in Germany, and only came home for the holidays.

Nora struggled through her life in this family for six months. We say "struggled," not because she was cruelly worked, or cruelly treated, but because continuous work of any kind was too much for her frail strength. Madame Lambert was not exacting. She required no dressmaking of

any kind done in the house, and the "femme de chambre" was sent to help "Madame Anna" with her work for two hours every afternoon. When she saw that her workwoman did not look strong, Madame Lambert insisted on her walking for half-an-hour in the garden every morning before she began work; and M. Lambert used to send her glasses of port wine, or sometimes bottles of "Pelell," as Mr. Bass's strengthening liquor is termed in France, from his dinner table.

"Do you know," he said to his wife one evening, "I feel quite uncomfortable about not having 'Madame Anna' in to dinner. I'm sure she's as much of a lady as Miss Coachem. I came upon her out in the garden this morning, and had quite a long talk with her, to rub up my English a little, and really she's a very lady-like person."

"One cannot judge by faces, or by a little accidental conversation," replied his wife. "She may be quite uneducated, for anything we know. I confess she has been something of a beauty, though I think she looks ill and consumptive now. You remember what Picard's wife told us, about her having left

her husband. Isn't it strange? I wonder who he was."

"I've a fancy myself, she's more than she seems to be, and that she has lived in good society."

"Well, I told her distinctly what her work here would be, and she accepted the situation, and seemed glad to come. So really I have nothing more to do with it. Perhaps if she has something on her mind she prefers being in a retired sort of position. She has a great deal of taste, and works very nicely."

As Nora's time was her own, and as she never saw any of the family after dinner, she used to retire to rest, at the not at all unusual hour in those parts of the world, nine o'clock, after generally spending an hour in the perusal of one of Dickens' books in the Tauchnitz edition, with which M. Lambert had kindly provided her. It was in all probability this regular and unstrained life, added to the long hours of rest which she was able to take (though her work while it lasted was close and continuous enough); also the good offices of her English master, who believed in port wine for

delicate people, as he believed in the Bible for all men, which combined to pull Nora through the summer and autumn months at Y——. About the middle of August, however, a slow fever entered into her veins; by the end of the month, it was settled there; she lost strength and flesh rapidly, and twice fainted at her work. Madame Lambert called in a doctor, who examined her carefully, and questioned her closely; and then, after uttering a few kind and encouraging sentences, walked out of her work-room and asked to see Madame Lambert. Madame Lambert received him in the dining-room, where she was putting out silver for a dinner party, and where Mademoiselle Elise, her eldest daughter, was arranging flowers in épergnes and vases.

"Well, monsieur, do you want to speak to me?" inquired the handsome, bright, fashionable-looking woman, who looked as if illness had never come near her, and never would. "Run away to the school-room, Elise; I will call you again in five minutes.

"Madame," said the doctor, "this 'demoiselle,' whom you have called me in to see, is very ill."

"Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, quel malheur! I was afraid she was. At first we thought it was only the heat, and I did not let her work so much. Are not those flowers exquisite, monsieur? She suits me exactly. Really I am desolée."

"She ought not to stay any longer. She ought to go back to her family or friends, if she has any."

"I really don't know what she has. She came to me from X——, where she had been a sort of nursery governess. We have taken all the care of her we could. She has been having iron and wine, and so on. Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, que c'est dommage! Sylvie," called out madame, "bring me some more water here. Are her lungs affected, monsieur?"

"Yes, they are seriously affected. From what I make out, she must always have been very delicate. She ought to have perfect rest, and great care to give her even a chance."

"Dear, dear, dear, how unfortunate! I must tell Henri. Well, then, all we can do is to give her five or ten pounds, and tell her she must go home. I am very sorry about it. I hope she has somewhere to go."

After this, the doctor took his leave. He paid several more visits; for his patient took cold, and remained unfit to travel for the space of three weeks. Her cold left her with the same wretched cough that she had had during the past winter, but which had yielded to the delicious spring and summer weather. This time, however, it yielded to nothing. In spite of all, she still tried to work, and did work, though Madame Lambert insisted on "half-time;" telling her also that she should not allow her to stay after the third week in October, as "Henri" said if she travelled to England in November, she might catch all "the dreadful English fogs," which would be certain to kill her.

Before the third week in October came, a settled idea had taken possession of the poor workwoman's mind; an idea that clung to her waking or sleeping; an idea which made her sit up in her bed at nights, oppressed with a strange excitement, which made her bend her knees in prayer—such prayer, at least, as she knew how to offer—which, though it increased the fever burning ceaselessly in her veins, yet lent her a sort of artificial and temporary strength.

"I am going home to my friends," she wrote to good Mademoiselle Picard, "for I am unfit for any more work. Thank you, and God bless you, for your goodness to me, when I was more desolate than I have ever been in my life."

On a lovely, bright October morning, she left the house of the kind Lamberts, and took the train from Y—— to Paris. Early in the morning of the next day (for the "grande-vitesse" trains in France are both slower and safer than our awful English expresses) she reached and left Paris. In the evening, after recruiting herself with bad tea and a stale bun at —— Station, she left—trembling with weakness, but still kept up by that strange excitement in her veins—for Gowerford. At Gowerford she sought an hotel, and fainting, after her first faltering steps towards her room, was carried to her bed; and the night porter in attendance sent in haste for a doctor.

The doctor recognised her and she recognised him. He had not been her own medical man, but Mrs. Rochefort Longley's face was of course well known in the town and neighbourhood.

When she was sufficiently restored to speak, she said—

"Mr. Stanley, will you send the woman out. I want to speak to you;" and then, fixing her eyes on his face, as if she were to read there her sentence of life or death, she asked—

"Is Mr. Longley living at Riverswood now?"

"I believe he is. In fact I am sure of it, for I saw his carriage in town only yesterday. He has been away from England a great deal; but he came home, I believe, some months ago."

"That will do," said Nora, sinking back on her pillow as if she desired to hear, and could bear no more; "and now, Mr. Stanley, give me wine or brandy, or anything you can, that will keep me up, for I shall need my strength to-morrow. You see I am almost finished."

"I see you are," answered the doctor, pityingly, as he looked at her.

"Do you think I look very ill?" she inquired, after a short pause.

"You are evidently thoroughly exhausted at present, so it is not fair to judge. You do not look well at all."

She said no more.

After the brief excitement of the doctor's visit, and of the stimulant he had given her, was over, a nameless dread and depression gradually laid hold of the unfortunate woman who had come so far on an errand, at once so irreproachable, so strange, and so sad. Almost on the threshold of the home, towards which she had pressed with such feverish longing, she felt her courage fail, her strength fall sick, her heart almost despair. "After all," she thought, "if he does not care for me, if he thinks it shameful for me to have come back, if he thinks me too vile to forgive, or speak to, or protect! I only want him to protect me; but will he do it? have I the right to ask it? No, God knows I have not; and I have come all this way, perhaps, to be told it, to be . . . . oh, what have I done? What have I done? How mad, how foolish, how foolishly trusting I have been!"

During the weary morning and afternoon of that long day, she lay on her bed, troubled, excited, and exhausted, by the ceaseless alternation of her feelings. At one moment, the sense of her illness and

loneliness oppressed her with such sickening terror, that she felt anything was better than being left to cope with her fate alone. If her husband would make a home for her anywhere, and on any terms, let him do it, she would be thankful; she had borne, and she had worked till she could bear and work no more; there was the capability of no more endurance or effort in her. Then the shame of her position, the greatness of what had been her fault, the hardihood of the step she was meditating, would suddenly make the blood rush in a crimson tide to her face, and she would turn herself to her pillow and almost wish she could die there, and so end her wretchedness and shame.

For a few hours only of that night she slept, and in sleeping, dreamed that she was in one of the village churches abroad, which she had visited with her lover. She saw the lights before the Virgin's shrine, and smelt the sweet odours of the flowers beneath; kneeling women, with calm, uplifted faces, were around her, and the last rays of the evening sun streamed softly in through the painted window-panes.

She woke to the dull, grey dawn of an

English November morning, with something of the feeling that makes us shiver as we pass out of some atmosphere of light and warmth, into the chill night air, through which we must wend our solitary way home. Her way home, if she would seek it, must be made through this cold and pitiless mist. She tried to frame a few words of prayer, as she sat up shuddering and desolate, upon her bed, and said, "God help me! . . . And oh, God, let him forgive me, and take care of me again!"

She rose at last and dressed, and as she sat before her looking-glass let down all her long fair hair, which now had lost so much of its former thickness and lustre. She held it across her wasted little hand, and regarded it with mournful eyes. "My poor 'Lord Ronald,'" she said, "as they used to call him, he will hardly know it again, but he is the only one . . . he is the only one in all the world who will not love it the less because it is so spoiled!"

Sobs rose thick in her throat—rose one after another, and strove to vent themselves in tears, but she forced them back. She knew that she must save her poor strength,

and indeed the God of all pity must have borne her through that terrible day, supporting her in arms whose power and compassion never falters or fails!

Late in the afternoon, trusting to the moonlight which she knew would follow the slow failing of the day, she entered a small close carriage, and told the man to drive her to Riverswood! She drew down the blinds that she might not see the familiar road; the well-known cottages and farmsteads; the bridge and the river—the hundred objects that she had known so well in the happy, innocent days that would come no more.

She was nearing the end of her journey; Riverswood was almost reached, when a sudden and indescribable horror of what she was about to do—a mad sort of fear that after all she was wrong—inexcusable, shameless, struck her with sudden panic. She looked out of the window, and saw the great park walls almost before her; in a few minutes they would be in front of its massive, solemn iron gates. Oh God! she dare not do it—she dare not—she must turn back.

"I—I have changed my mind," the poor

thing gasped, pushing down the carriage window, and raising her wild face towards the driver. "I—I did not think—it is not here I meant."

"Where is it then, ma'am?" asked the driver, pulling up his reins, and looking and speaking doggedly enough.

"Is it—could you—is it very far to go to Leyton—I mean to The Beeches, not far from Leyton?"

She hardly knew what she said. Until this moment the idea had never once entered her mind of going to her father's home. She felt as if she had less place there than anywhere. She believed she had disgraced that home beyond reparation, and that there would never more be forgiveness or welcome for her there.

"The Beeches, ma'am—Leyton!" repeated the driver, almost angrily. "Why, ma'am, we're nigh on eight miles from Leyton. You told me Riverswood, ma'am. Mr. Longley's place, ma'am. And this is it. We're close upon the lodge gates—you can a'most see 'em, ma'am, if you look out."

She knew the man must think her mad. She fell upon her knees on the carriage

floor, and for a few moments seemed to struggle for the possession of her senses. "What am I to do?—what am I to do?" she repeated again and again to herself. Her doubt, her anguish, her fear rent her, till she felt as if her brain were turning.

"I suppose she'll come to presently," was the soliloquy of the driver, "if I let her alone a bit. Leastwise I'm not going to Leyton with this 'oss this time o' night. She'll have to make up her mind to Riverswood or 'ome again." He sat like a block upon his seat, therefore, looking straight before him, and determined not to proffer a word until such time as it was necessary. But it never was necessary. After the space of three or four minutes, the white face appeared at the window again, and a trembling, but resolved voice uttered the words—

"You may go on now. I shall not stop you again. But take the field drive, which is at the next iron gate you will come to; and let me out at a little distance from the house."

The die was cast now; and cast after her brief paroxysm of terror—with something

of the old dignity and control of spirit, that through all her life—in misfortune as in prosperity—Nora had possessed in common with many other women of her sort. It is not always women of most power and character who can act on emergencies, with the quiet self-command of which they are glad to think afterwards; but it is often given to more ordinary and more passionless women thus to act, thus to command themselves.

When they came near the hall, she stopped the driver, and told him she would walk the little way that remained. He must stay and wait for her a while, in the road, she said,

"I can't wait very long, ma'am," said the man, hesitating, but touching his hat as he spoke (he had begun to have vague suspicions as to who might be the person who had appeared so insane one moment, and so calmly dignified the next); "I've other work for to-night, ma'am. A large party ma'am, at——"

"I shall not be long. I shall send you word what you are to do," answered Nora, interrupting him. Then turning back,

after she had walked a few steps, she said, "I will pay you now;" and taking out her purse, she asked what was his fare, and paid it. "But you must wait a little time here, I shall not be long if I come back," she said.

"I will wait, ma'am," said the man. He watched her slight figure, draped and veiled in black, as she moved hurriedly away, and was lost behind the dark and now moon-lit groups of fir and laurel.

"And I'll be dashed if that isn't her," he said to himself, as he pocketed his money; "it's his run-away wife, if it's a woman! Well, they've kept it pretty close at the hotel, that's all I know. What the devil 'll he do with her now she has come back, I wonder? I know what I'd do with mine."

After lingering one brief moment, till she gained courage to do so, and till she felt her voice was under control, Nora knocked at a certain door at the side of the house, which went by the name of the "south" door, and waited there. As she stood, she heard the gradually approaching step of one of the maid-servants, who came

on in an unconcerned manner, humming a tune, and expecting to see the face of her lover, or at least of a friend, when she opened the door; for this was the entrance affected by the acquaintances of all the upper servants at Riverswood.

"Yes 'm. Mrs. Longley is in. Do you wish to see her 'm?" inquired the maid, a little pertly; for she had no opinion of strange ladies, who presented themselves in the dusk of the evening, and gave no name, and she was disappointed that it was not "William" who had rapped.

"I did not say 'Mrs.'—I said 'Mr.' Longley," replied Nora.

"Oh, *Mr.* Longley? I really do not know whether he is in or not. Do you wish to see him?"

"Yes."

"Will you step in here, then, ma'am; and I will inquire if Mr. Longley is disengaged?"

"Edward," she said, looking in at the door of the servants' hall, "there's a lady of some sort wants to see master. Will you see if he is disengaged?"

"A lady? Oh, the devil!" said Edward,

with a slight laugh, as he rose from the table and his newspaper, "that's something new," and he sauntered out to inquire at the drawing-room door if the master would see a lady who had called.

"Your master has gone to the rectory," answered Mrs. Longley, from her easy chair, and her novel, "he will be back very soon. Who is she?"

"I don't know who she is, ma'am; Catherine opened the door to her—the south door, ma'am. She said she wished to speak to Mr. Longley."

"*Is* she a lady?"

"Catherine said so, ma'am."

"Very well; ask her into the library, and I will go to her."

Edward walked with a nonchalant and affected air into the little room where Nora was sitting, and requested her in a casual sort of way to follow him. He preceded her to the library, presented her with a chair, poked the fire, lighted a couple of wax candles on the mantel-piece and withdrew.

Mrs. Longley entered a few moments afterwards. She held herself with the

same haughty uprightness as ever, but her face was greatly aged; it looked worn and sallow, and there was neither hope nor happiness in the expression of the cold, faded, grey eyes. Nora's heart sank—sank—sank.

"I understand you wished to see my son?" said Mrs. Longley, seating herself. "He is not in at this moment. Is there anything I can do for you?"

Nora had raised her veil when she came into the library, for her breath had begun to come in short and panting gasps, from the effect of the unwonted and terrible excitement she was enduring. She had forgotten to lower it again. Faded eyes can be sharp—cruelly sharp, at times; and Mrs. Longley, almost as she pronounced the last word of her little set sentence, recognized in the woman before her, her son's lost and guilty wife. She started up, seized one of the candlesticks from the mantel-piece, and held the light full against Nora's lovely, altered, agitated face.

"My God!" she exclaimed, drawing back as if stung by some serpent, "you *are* that woman!—You *are* Nora Heaton!—What are you here for?—How *dare* you come?"

Her whole tone and manner inspired Nora with absolute terror. She was afraid that in some way she would be sent out of the house before she had seen her husband.

"Oh, Mrs. Longley!" she said, rising from her chair, but clasping her hands on the table, against which she leant for support, "let me see him, if it is only for a few moments! I have come a long, long way to see him. I have, indeed!"

She struggled hard to repress her tears, but they would not be repressed. They fell like rain down her thin face.

"Do not look at me!—do not appeal to me," answered Mrs. Longley, almost violently, while her hands and her whole frame trembled as she stood; "you are a wicked, *wicked* woman! and he does not wish ever to see or hear of you again."

"Mrs. Longley, you must not tell me so! you are killing me!"

"*Killing you!*—and what have *you* been doing to him?" demanded his mother, roused, as she had never been roused in her whole life before. "Did you think of him, or of me, or of anybody, when you gave way to your wicked passion for that

wicked man? and when you disgraced your husband?"

She stopped, almost choked with emotion.

"I have been miserably punished," said Nora, at last; "you know I have, Mrs. Longley.

"*Punished!*" repeated the elder lady, with bitter contempt; "yes, punished I suppose by being left by him, when he was tired of you! Nora Heaton, listen to me," she continued, the long-nursed hatred of her heart breaking forth at last; "you were married to a man of whom you were as unworthy as any lowest creature that walks the street. He would have done better if he had married some poor village girl, who could not write her name; for then he might have had an honest wife at least. I never liked you; I opposed your marriage to him to the last; I told him you were not fit for him—I told him so, again and again." . . .

Weak and selfish and worldly woman as she was, and always had been, she was still a mother, and Rochefort was her only son, and hot and hard words came fast to her lips, when, at last, she could tell the

woman to whom he had sacrificed himself, face to face, how she hated and scorned her!

"What have you come for?" continued Mrs. Longley, when she could command her voice. "I suppose you have some object in coming? What is it?"

"I am ill—I believe I am dying," answered Nora at last. "It cannot be so very wicked to wish to see my husband once again. . . . I will ask him to forgive me—in the dust—at his feet, if I may only see him!"

His mother, sitting upright in her chair, struggled with a rising in her throat, that nearly choked her, and waited for a little before she spoke again.

"And what will you do then? You do not suppose you will stay one hour longer in this house, while I am under its roof, do you? and my son will hardly turn me out—turn out the mother who has borne him to give place to——" She stopped before she uttered the word which was on her lips.

"If any power of mine could have brought it about," continued Mrs. Longley, "I would

have had you divorced from him long ago; yes, though it would have published your shame over the world. And then you would have had no right to come back to him, or to ask anything of him."

There was another pause, broken only by the sounds of Nora's stifled grief; but Mrs. Longley heeded nothing. She was long past giving either heed or sympathy.

"It is just like the selfishness and boldness you have shown all through, to dare to come here after him," she pursued. "As if you had not done enough to ruin his life. Do you want him to support you, now that your lover has deserted you, and that you are tired of keeping yourself?"

"Oh, I cannot—I cannot bear it any longer," said Nora, rising and wringing her hands. "I will go, Mrs. Longley, if you will reproach me no more. Perhaps I was not right to come. I did not know if I was!"

"You think me pitiless, I dare say," answered his mother, in a hard voice; "and I know I am pitiless. You will have to go elsewhere than to me for pity; for I hate you, and I shall always hate you. I have

spoken to you this once; but I will never speak to you,or look on your face again!"

God in Heaven! how some women, and women of little strength in other ways, can remember, and can hate!

Pale and shaken with wrath, Mrs. Longley sat in one of the antique carved chairs, dark, high-backed, and crimson-cushioned, and almost glared upon her son's wife.

But in the dead silence that followed her last words, and before she could think of another bitter thing to say, both the women heard the opening of the front door; they heard it shut, in the master's decided, rather peremptory way, they heard the firm footstep in the hall, they heard a few words spoken, and then the step came straight onward to the room in which they sat. Nora had started up.

"For God's sake," she said, with piteous supplication; "let me see him for one moment, by myself—he—I—he has a right to that, Mrs. Longley!"

But his mother sat rigid in her chair, and never moved. It was more than the poor, outraged wife could bear. She made a rapid step towards the door, and with passionate

force pushed aside the arm that Mrs. Longley, rising suddenly, stretched out to keep her back.

"I will—I will," she gasped; "you shall not." But it was too late. The vehement half-stifled words had not been heard through the heavy oaken door; the handle was turned, and as the master entered, his wife had only time to turn round, to throw herself on a sofa, and to hide her face in her trembling arms. He should not see her face, he should not hear her speak, while that woman was in the room!

Rochefort stood for one moment with his back to the door, bewildered. He had seen the rapid movement, and now, looking at his mother for explanation, he saw only a white stern visage that told him nothing. Yet, no faintest suspicion of the truth crossed his mind. For one wild moment indeed—a moment in which his heart beat so as to stop his breath—he thought of a woman, before whom, if she had been there, he must have thrown himself on his knees; of whom he dared not think; of whom he prayed not to dream; but for whom his heart still craved at times, with an almost intolerable hunger. No: this was not Angélique.

When he saw that, and he saw it in an instant, it seemed not to matter to him who it was. The lady was evidently agitated or in deep sorrow, and his mother looked as he had never seen her look before; but things would soon explain themselves, he supposed. He seated himself on his usual low chair before the fire, and put out his hand to pat Nigel's head. It was impossible to speak at first. His thoughts had gone with a wild bound over the Channel, and into a little white villa at Auteuil, and into a "salon," fragrant with soft scents, and etherealized by the presence of a woman who loved him, as he believed no other woman ever would; and he required a little time to bring back those strange thoughts, and to speak as if they had never left him.

"Is this the lady who, I am told, wishes to see me?" he asked at length; looking up, and forcing himself to see only her, his library, and his mother.

"This is the lady," replied Mrs. Longley, with an almost awful sternness and meaning in her voice.

("Oh, God, if she would but go!" moaned poor Nora to herself; "will not he send her away? He can do it!")

Rochefort raised his eyes in the direction of his mysterious guest, regarded her for a moment with some surprise and curiosity, and then glanced again towards his mother. The latter longed to speak, and had intended to speak, but now she felt tongue-tied. She dare not. In Rochefort's actual presence, it would have required more courage than she possessed to do it.

"Perhaps," said Mr. Longley, still patting his pointer's head, "the lady's business is especially with me, mother. We may get on better if you leave us five minutes for conversation."

The words were coolly but decidedly spoken, and there was no alternative but to go.

"Just as you wish," answered Mrs. Longley, with a sort of trembling formality in her voice, as she rose, "just as you wish, certainly; but as soon as you are disengaged, Rochefort, I shall be glad to see and speak with you in the drawing-room."

She uttered these words with marked emphasis, and when her son opened the door for her, walked out with stately step.

"What is there I can do for you?" inquired Mr. Longley, when he re-entered.

He had taken up his place against the mantel-piece, was leaning one arm upon it, and his head upon his hand, and his dark, keen eyes were now turned fully and fixedly upon his wife's only half-averted face. As he did so, his heart gave a sudden beat,—a sort of spasm or shock contracted it. The next moment he had moved, with a half-uttered exclamation. She did not give him time to speak. She came towards him with her little hands tightly clasped before her, and her pale, tear-stained face raised to his.

"My darling," she said, "do you know me?"

The blood rushed in a wild tide to his face.

"You—Nora! . . . . Is it possible?"

He could not utter another word.

"I have come to ask you to forgive me," she went on, still standing before him in the same attitude of almost solemn grief and simplicity, though she trembled very much. "I have nowhere else to go; and I am very ill. I cannot work for myself any more."

For one moment he looked at her with a wild, strange expression in his face, such as

she had never in her life seen there before ; then he turned away from her—for the moment he could not help it—and seating himself on his old chair, by the side of which his dog lay watching him with wondering and wistful eyes, covered his face in his hands. As she watched, she saw his frame shaken with a deep, long-drawn sob. She could not bear it ; she knelt down before him, and rested her clasped hands on his knee.

"Rochefort," she said, "I am so sorry ! I have been so sorry for a long, long time ! I never meant to be so wicked. I have thought of you day and night since I left you ; and if I had dared, I would have come back. I have been very miserable without you. Will you forgive me now ?"

He did not answer her at once. He could not ; his throat refused to utter the words for which she so longed. The poor girl's heart had begun to turn deadly sick with fear, when at last, raising his eyes, he took her wasted hands, which were so hot and trembling, into his strong, firm, and faithful clasp.

"Do you want me to forgive you, Nora ?"

For God's sake, be truthful with me now!"

"Want you to forgive me?" she answered, weeping. "I want nothing else on earth. . . . If you cannot, I do not care to live. I shall pray God to let me die!"

For a few moments, he struggled with the overpowering emotion of his heart—emotion that almost mastered him.

"Do you mean all you have just said to me? Will it make you happy to come back to me?"

"Happy?" she repeated. "Oh, you know it will! It will be like heaven! Arthur, do speak a little word of love to me again," she said, utterly overcome, as she flung her arms about his neck. "You loved me so once! . . . . and no one else in the world will have pity on me! I cannot bear you to say nothing—I cannot bear it!"

He clasped her then, with the deep sobs shaking his breast as he did so, and she rained her mingled tears and kisses upon his face.

"I thought you would! I knew it! I prayed God that you should. Oh, I love you—love you! . . . I never loved you until now."

* * * *

After a long time, looking up into his face as she lay exhausted and motionless, but at rest within his arms, she said—

"You have never told me if you forgive me. I want to hear you say that."

"Utterly, entirely, as I hope to be forgiven."

After a little pause, she said again—

"Rochefort, I did not mean what I told you, that I had never loved you until now. It was not true."

"Have you ever loved me then?"

"Yes; ever since I have been trying to be good."

"Since when is that, Nora?"

"Since—since—since he left me, Rochefort."

Her husband did not speak; but she felt the hard, strong throbbing of his heart against her breast.

"You must not speak to me of him," he said at last, in a voice that showed the passion he was resolutely restraining. "Of yourself as much as you like . . . . never of him!"

She was silent.

"Nora, if I ask you a question, will you answer it truly—truly, as before God?"

"Yes," she said.

"Is there anything between you and me at this moment that you would not dare to tell me, except what I know?"

"No—no, nothing!"

"You have never—never cared for anyone since I married you—up to this hour—except him?"

"Oh God, no! How can you ask me, Rochefort? Am I so wicked as that?"

He did not answer her, but drawing her a little closer to him, he stooped down and kissed her lips several times. He had not done so yet. It came across her with an awful sickness of feeling that until that moment he had not known, and had had no means of knowing, how far she had ever betrayed him.

"No, I do not doubt it. Have I been speaking like a brute to you, Nora?"

"No," she answered sadly, "you have only made me feel what it all means. . . . . I can never, never in this world, be what I once was to you now. I see that. Oh, it is so terrible! We might have been so

happy together! And now I am dying, and going to leave you, and my life is all lost—all lost! Oh, Arthur, Arthur, don't let me go! don't let me go!"

* * * *

CHAPTER XI.

An hour afterwards, in the drawing-room where his mother had been awaiting his coming in an indescribable fever of suspense, indignation, and agitation, Mr. Longley had to inform her that his wife was coming to live again under the same roof as himself.

"Then you are simply mad, Rochefort!" exclaimed his mother, in the most unmitigated passion she had ever been in since she was born. "You are simply raving mad! and so everybody will say. And do you think for a moment that I will stay in the same house with that woman!"

"Then," returned Rochefort, who was almost as pale as death, "then you will have to leave it; for my wife is going to stay here as long as this or any other home is of any use to her."

Mrs. Longley looked at him, and as she did so, something in his expression made her cool down. Her next words were spoken in a different tone.

"Don't you think, then, she will be here long?"

"What do you mean?" asked he, looking up abruptly.

"Do you think she is ill? What has she said to you?"

"What has she said to me?" repeated her son, a sudden, deep colour mounting to his face. "Do you ask me that, mother?"

She saw she had gone too far. She made some hasty apology, saying she had only meant to inquire if he thought Nora really ill. She had no wish to interfere with his management of affairs which were distinctly and entirely his own," she added; and this was said with a slight touch of sarcasm.

"Then for the future leave the management of my own affairs to me," returned her son, with some anger. "It is all I ask; and if my wife is to be judged, let her be judged by me. She has suffered enough."

"I suppose she has been telling you what I said to her?" was his mother's immediate comment, as she looked round on him.

"She has told me a little—a very little, I should imagine. What did you say?"

"I should not have minded if you had heard it all," answered Mrs. Longley, agitating her screen, and speaking with a sort of recklessness quite unusual with her. "I would say it all again, if she were here now. She deserved every word of it. . . . . And if you are going to pet her up, and defend her, and spoil her, and—and—all that sort of thing, I am glad I did give her my mind, while I had the chance."

As Rochefort said nothing, but only bit his lips, and coloured, with passionate and repressed anger (he never quarrelled with his mother if he could help it), she presently pulled out her pocket-handkerchief, and began sniffing behind it in the way she always did when she considered her son insubordinate and unreasonable.

"I have no doubt at all that you consider you have a very cruel and hard-hearted mother, because she loves you, and considers you ought to show some proper pride, and doesn't wish to hear you ridiculed and laughed at, and—"

"Laughed at!" repeated Rochefort, in

a voice that stopped her suddenly. "Good God, how dare you speak to me, mother! Do you know what you are saying?"

"Well, you will be blamed, then," asserted she, by way of compromise. "You may make sure of that."

"And do you want me to care about being blamed?"

"Yes, certainly; where the world will be right and you wrong."

He did not answer her at once. He took two or three rapid turns in the room, and then suddenly stopping in front of her, said, in a voice that he controlled by a great effort,

"The thing is done, mother. Don't speak to me about it again. If you are hurt, I am sorry, for I have no wish to hurt you. But I can't speak about this. We must leave the subject alone now and for evermore."

Mrs. Longley kept silence for some minutes. When she spoke, it was to say,

"There are some things that must be settled between us, Rochefort. Even you must see that. Of course, you do not intend that we shall be forced to see each

other, or meet as we used to do? You cannot intend to thrust that indignity upon your mother?"

"I do not intend to thrust any indignity upon you," he answered.

"You know, I suppose, that it would be an indignity to require me to sit in the same room, or at the same board with her?"

"I see that you would consider it one; and I have no right to demand the sacrifice of your feelings to mine. There is but one way out of the difficulty." And then he left her abruptly, and went back to his wife.

* * * *

"We must leave the house, Alison; I must leave this house, which I have never left but of my own free will since I was married!" was poor Mrs. Longley's indignant announcement to her maid and friend, as she sat in front of her dressing-table, and had her grey hair brushed and combed. "I am to be turned away from Riverswood, on account of that woman—that wicked, sinful, worldly, extravagant woman—whom I warned my son against from the first; but he would never listen to warning, or to reason. It's dreadful—it's terrible!"

"He'll live to repent it, ma'am," was Alison's sage rejoinder, as she went on calmly brushing, "you'll see that."

"I only hope he mayn't repent it too bitterly," observed his mother.

"Ah——!" rejoined the maid, in a mysterious manner, and shaking her head.

"I don't believe she'll live long, Alison, that's one thing," pursued Mrs. Longley, after a pause.

"Not the winter out, ma'am. I'm convinced of that."

"Not the winter out, Alison! What makes you believe that?"

"I don't see how there can be two opinions about it, ma'am. I never saw such a change in anyone. Dear, dear, dear, it's terrible! and look at the position she had, and the advantages, and master set on her as if there was no one like her in the world. And it's all come to this!"

"You say she's so changed—then, have you seen her?" inquired Mrs. Longley, turning her eyes on her maid's face.

"Yes, ma'am. I took her in her supper. Master asked me to; and before that I took her some sal-volatile, and smelling-

salts, and so on. She was very bad, ma'am, indeed; perhaps you don't know. And I suppose master didn't care about any of the maids going into the room. I was in once afterwards, with a glass of cold water; and I sat in the room with her while master was speaking to you, ma'am. She never moved or spoke while he was gone; but she seemed to listen to every sound and footstep. When he came back, ma'am, he went and sat down by her sofa, and she stretched out her hand, and he took it; and then I went away."

"What room is she in?" asked Mrs. Longley, after a silence of several minutes.

"In master's, ma'am."

"In your master's!" echoed Mrs. Longley, actually rising from her chair, colouring crimson all over her face and glaring upon Alison as if she thought her bereft of reason. "In your master's? How *can* you tell me so?"

"Master is going into one of the north rooms, ma'am—the blue chintz-room. He didn't think any but his own room would be safe for—for—for *Mrs. Rochefort* to go in, ma'am."

"You may well hesitate, Alison, in giving her any title. I do not know what title she has a right to. But, however, we will say no more. It will not be for long, perhaps, as you say. I wonder if she knows that the man she ran away with is engaged to be married? It would be a good thing that she *should* know."

"Is Mr. Glanville going to be married, ma'am?" inquired Miss Alison, in some surprise.

"Yes; and I hope she knows it. He is in India—in a Bombay regiment; and he is going to marry the colonel's daughter, a girl of eighteen. Now give me my cap, Alison, and don't talk any more. I am completely worn out!"

* * * *

Yes, he was going to be married—the news had just reached Lady Belton; but if he was, can we blame him? He had to do something to stifle remorse, for he felt it; and to drug memory, for it pained him. What else was he to do?

* * * *

As soon as his room could be made ready for her, Rochefort had carried his wife up-

stairs and laid her on her bed. As she loosened her clinging arms from about his neck, he drew the pillow on which his lonely head had rested for so many nights, underneath her, and laid her gently back upon it.

"Good-night," he said, kissing her. "I will send Catherine to you. Ask her for whatever you want. I have told her to sleep in my dressing-room which is close to you."

She could not utter a word; but she returned his kiss and followed him with her eyes to the door. He looked back to say good-night once more, and then left her.

About one o'clock, when he had sat before his library fire, and paced the floor, till he cared to pace it and to think no more, he went upstairs to the room which had been hastily made ready for him in a wing of the house. As he passed his wife's door, he stopped to listen. For a moment, all seemed quiet; then he heard a sound as of violent but smothered weeping. After waiting a few moments to hear if it ceased, he turned the handle of the door and went in.

"What is the matter? Are you in pain?" he asked. "Tell me if you are."

His wife flung her wasted arms about his neck, as he bent over her, and gasped out,

"Oh, I am so glad you have come! I have nearly killed myself with crying. I thought my heart would break!"

"Has not Catherine attended to you?" asked he, indignantly. "Where is she?"

"No, no; don't call her! I can ring if I want her—you told me to—but I don't want her."

"What do you want then, Nora?"

"I want you to be near me," answered his wife, her sobs choking her afresh. "I should not care if I lay on the ground, or outside your door, or anywhere, if only I were near you."

He threw himself on the bed beside her, and drew her into his arms.

"I will stay with you, my darling, if you care for me to stay."

"If you did not quite forgive me," she said, "I should believe God would not."

She lay exhausted on her husband's breast, and gradually, as he watched her, she fell asleep. Once he moved a little to change

the position of his aching arm. She started suddenly and screamed out; and when he covered her again, and put back the damp hair from her forehead, he felt that she was in a bath of terrible perspiration.

"You're not going away, Rochefort, are you?" she said, fixing her terrified eyes upon his face.

"No, my darling, I will not leave you."

"Then I am quite safe," she answered; and so, encircled with his arms, and with her head laid at rest upon his heart, she slept again.

CHAPTER XII.

"HAD Rochefort Longley done right, in taking back his wife? It was a question of course. Some people considered it "shameful," some that it was "highly incorrect, to say the least of it;" some even expressed the belief that it was "putting an actual premium upon vice," and some confined themselves to affirming that *they* "wouldn't do such a thing for any woman that ever trod this earth." A few said that he had behaved courageously and generously. Among the latter were Lady Hallingford and Clara Belton.

Mrs. Longley left Riverswood for Brighton, three or four days after her son's wife entered the house. Rochefort did not oppose her going, for he believed that the

arrangement would be decidedly for the comfort of all parties. He drove her himself to the station at Gowerford, stayed with her till the train started, and kissed her on the platform, in the presence of a goodly number of persons.

"There is no quarrel then," said the upper "one thousand" of Gowerford and its neighbourhood. "But of course she finds it more comfortable to be away."

"And any mother *would*, under the circumstances," the middle-aged married ladies concurred in declaring; "no power should induce me to remain in a house where my son had taken back a wife who had been unfaithful to him!"

"Dr. S—— says she is in a rapid decline," says somebody, at somebody else's tea-party.

"*Is she?*" exclaims a chorus of voices, belonging to young ladies.

"In that case, he has only acted with proper Christian charity," observes a clergyman's wife. "We are told to 'forgive until seventy times seven,' you know; and she's not been as bad as that. However even putting that aside, he could hardly

have done anything else than what he has done."

"Oh yes, he could, very easily," exclaims the dean's wife, who is considered "worldly," "he could have sent her to one of his other houses; and gone to see her now and then. It's what I myself should have thought the proper course of action. I don't think he ought to drive his mother away from Riverswood."

In a country town an event such as the erring Mrs. Longley's return to her husband, was sure to furnish topics for conversation to almost every woman within its bounds, for three months. In fact, the country for ten miles round, gave itself up to consider the affair from every possible point of view, and in every possible light, from the end of October till the New Year came in.

People living in London have very little or no idea of what life entirely out of it is. Where there is some large, stirring manufacturing centre, the case is different; but the real old country life of England is a thing distinctly sui generis, and a thing difficult of realization to those whose fate it has never been to study it at first hand.

Rich and educated people live in roomy houses, and walk in delicious gardens, who know nothing of the rest of the world, but what they read in books and newspapers; who have never crossed the Channel, and do not possess a friend—perhaps scarcely an acquaintance—who has done so either; —who have not seen London for ten, or twenty, or thirty years—perhaps never.

There is among some of these families a spirit of far truer refinement, simplicity, and piety, than it is easy to find where life is faster, and where all surrounding influences are less pure; but there is among others a narrow-minded and utterly wearisome and unprofitable worldliness, which contrasts unfavourably even with that abhorrent thing "London society" worldliness. Life in London is so great, so stirring, so rapid, the beat of its vast heart is so passionate and full, that unless a man or woman lives in its midst as a selfish recluse or a senseless driveller, he or she must necessarily reflect somewhat of the light, the thought, the knowledge, which springs every day into existence, which calls forth effort or resistance every hour.

Whatever a man wants in London, he can have, if he seek it, of the highest and best. Be it a newspaper, a club, a library, a museum,—(we had almost said a picture-gallery, but we withdraw the words, in reference to Italy) :—a concert, an opera, lecture, preaching, conversation, learning, sympathy—whatever it be—in London, if he wish, he can find it. If his will or his taste prompt him, he can every day see, hear, or read something, to refine, to elevate, to strengthen, to cheer, or at the least and worst, to distract him.

But in a small country town a good lecturer, or a good singer, is heard, at the most, once a year. A good actor, perhaps never. The same people visit or offend the same people, year after year : if Mrs. So-and-So gives a ball, it is the talk of the country for weeks afterwards ; the ladies discuss it during their afternoon calls on each other, or over their tea, till they can neither find or invent anything more to say about it. If Miss So-and-So is married, the whole conversation wherever you go—till the honeymoon is over—is upon the dresses and appearance of the bridesmaids, the looks and

behaviour of the bride and bridegroom, the trousseau, and the party afterwards. If there has been an amateur concert in the shire hall, people discuss the merits or demerits of Miss Smith's soprano, Mr. Brown's tenor, and Mr. Robinson's performances on the piano or violin, as anxiously, as energetically, and as continuously as if singers and musicians, whose least ambitious notes would put into shadow the best efforts of those to whom they have been listening, were thrilling mighty crowds of men and women, night after night, at only a few hours' distance.

If there is a scandal, then indeed a rich dish of spicy nuts is given to all the neighbourhood to crack, and they continue to crack them with unabated zest and zeal till there is not one, or a piece of one left. But it is not pleasant to dwell on spots in a fair and healthy picture, to sniff out odours that are not sweet in a full breeze of otherwise exquisite, and purifying, and invigorating air. Where, on the whole earth, but in our bonny English "country," do we see such frankness of hospitality, or more passionate and clinging love of "the soil?" Where do

we find so many good, healthy, happy families; where breathe a purer air (or a healthier, when it is warm enough in summer, and not too cold in winter); where else do we look upon half such lovely tracts of fairy gardens, or velvet sward, or glorious and shady park and meadow land? Where do we meet such genuine and unspoiled women, such manly, and honourable, and honest men?

Let us shut our eyes a little to what is small, restricted, and unappreciative in the accepted creeds and household conversation of some of the most loyal, and most pure-lived of English men and women, and turn with shame and penitence to face the awful cloud of vice and misery and wrong, which rises as a black vapour from the bosom of the great city of the world; the city which is so noble and so vile, so strong and so weak, so full of life and light and splendour, of progress and knowledge, and so diseased with wretchedness, and ignorance, and sin!

Rochefort's natural temperament, his early travelling, his public-school and college life,

his position, but more than everything else, his sensitive, high-wrought, and passionate perception of all that was noble and real in life, and his utter horror of all that was low and false, had kept him more than free from the "infirmities" of ordinary provincial existence.

His life had become more and more of late years, "a thing apart." He acted, he thought, he ruled, he spoke, with a sort of proud disregard of opinion or consequences. Some people thought him only sad, some called him proud, some said he was reserved and exclusive; his men feared, respected, and absolutely trusted him; some few men and women loved him with strong and unswerving fidelity of affection, and to these was open all that was noblest, bravest, and best, in one of the finest hearts that sorrow ever broke.

One day he and Colonel Saville were riding home together, after meeting accidentally at Sir Frederick Debenham's; the colonel having gone there with an invitation to dinner from his wife; and Longley, because he was simply restless and depressed, and wanted to see the children. He

had played with them, and talked to their mother till he was a changed man; the air felt lighter to him as he rode home, and in the horizon there was more colour and brightness, and less cloud. After rather a long silence, the colonel suddenly made the observation,

"Longley, I wonder you never think of standing for the county."

"Well, I have thought of it sometimes lately; but you don't suppose I want to contest you?"

"I have made up my mind not to stand again. My health won't bear it. There's another general election the autumn after next, and I wish you'd take my place. I'll hold on for you till then, if you will."

"I don't know if I have any chance."

"Of course you have. Why should you suppose you haven't? It is utter nonsense to fear; besides," added Colonel Saville, after a moment's pause, "you would not be defeated."

"You cannot possibly tell."

"You have the best chance of any man in the county by a long run."

"On the contrary, I don't think I am

especially popular. I have never seen any signs that I am."

"I know what you are better than you do, perhaps. Do you know the class of whose votes you would be surest if every man voted simply according to his will? The yeoman and farmer class. They would back you through thick and thin if they had their own way."

"Do you think so?"

"I know it. But look here, Longley, you had better try and throw off a little of that inborn pride of yours, if you can manage it gracefully. It doesn't become you badly, but you know," continued his friend, half laughing, "you must have a gracious smirk for everyone, rich as well as poor, sir, if you want to be returned member for Gowerfordshire."

"Then I shall never be returned, for if I had made a habit of riding my horse with my face to his tail, or blowing out the windows at Riverswood every week with my pistol, I would not change it to secure myself a chance at an election," returned Rochefort.

"I expected you would say so," returned Colonel Saville, coolly.

"And for the rest, I am not half the stoic you take me for," continued Longley. "You say it is utter nonsense 'to fear.' I dare say it is, but I don't think I should stand a defeat well, especially if it were a bad defeat, as it might be."

"Rochefort, I never can understand what makes you Conservative," pursued the colonel, after they had ridden on a little way; "are you sure you're not pretending, after all, and that if one were to look down to the core, one would not discover you to be a red-hot Democrat?"

"It is because I so hate and dread all tendencies towards Democratic rule, or rather tyranny, so abhor the idea of the insidious creeping of the 'bonnet rouge' into the pattern and colours of the Union Jack, that I am Conservative as you call me. . . . But my Conservatism amounts only to this, Saville, that if I must call myself of one party or the other, I take the party which stands at the most respectful distance from what I hate. That does not say that I never want to move. I ride my horse with a curb on, but I give her her head when I see my ground well before me, and know it is safe and firm."

"And so you would ride England?" remarked Colonel Saville.

"And so I would ride England," returned Rochefort, almost laughing, "if I ever had the power of laying a finger on her bridle-rein, or sitting for a few hours in the saddle. But what nonsense this is, Saville!"

"Why is it nonsense? I don't see why you shouldn't aim high. I was ambitious enough at your age."

"I don't believe I am ambitious."

"You ought to be. I wish I were as young as you are, and with as many years before me."

"I have had that said to me before by a man who thought me happy and himself unhappy, Colonel Saville. Yet I have suffered in life what I would pray God to spare my bitterest enemy."

The two rode on for some time in silence. At last Colonel Saville said—

"I have not asked you after your wife lately. I am always a little afraid that it is a painful subject to you.—How is she?"

"She is very weak. I am afraid the winter will try her very much. . . . But how are you? You have not told me for a

long time. Were you quite serious in saying you would be obliged to give up your seat?"

Colonel Saville saw, as he had seen before, that the subject on which he had touched was one which only bore a slight touch, and was then best let go. Rochefort seemed to shrink from all mention of his wife by others, with sensitive pain. Unless it was absolutely unavoidable, he never himself spoke of her. And yet people knew that his devoted consideration for, and tenderness to her, were making her slow decline as peaceful, as painless, and as little wearisome as human love and care could make it.

One day at the end of December, Longley had ridden over to Gowerford to see Dr. S., by his wife's especial wish. She had been remarkably restless and depressed on the previous day, and had said to him, "I wish you would get some one else to see me, Rochefort. I don't believe Dr. S. is doing me any good. Don't you think if I saw some London physician, who is famous for lung diseases, and so on, I might perhaps get better?"

"I will ask Dr. S. about it," said her husband, "if you like."

"I feel so much better some days," continued Nora, after she had recovered from one of the terrible fits of coughing, which often interrupted her efforts at talking; "and I think if only I could get stronger, I might get on. When my cough is not so troublesome, you don't know how different I feel. I often think I could go downstairs quite well, if I might."

He rode the next morning to town, and saw the doctor, and they had a long talk together. When he came back, he went, as he always did after walking or riding out, straight to his wife's room, which was now one of the large front bedrooms looking on to the park. No pains had been spared to make it as cheerful, as bright, and as little like a sick-room as it could be made. Pictures were hung everywhere upon the walls; pictures of scenes in sunny Italy and France; of English haymakers tossing hay; of girls crossing a limpid, dark-green stream, with overhanging ash and willow-trees; copies of some of the old masters' pure and inimitable conceptions of the faces of the Holy Mother and Child; and one or two grand interiors of cathedrals, with the

altar-lights and glory shining afar off, and prostrate figures of worshippers on the marble and shadowed pavement.

On tables, on shelves, and on dark oak brackets there were books and statuettes, and here and there vases or pots of greenhouse flowers: in the dressing-room adjoining there was a little aviary of birds, which could be moved on its wheeled stand to the side of Nora's sofa, whenever she cared to have it there.

("I get so tired of seeing no life anywhere," she had said once to her husband; "if I could only see a few birds from the window, it would not be so dull.")

The windows and her bed were hung with warm crimson and snowy muslin draperies, and at the foot of the bed stood Rochefort's writing-table, with his desk, books, and papers; because Nora, at times, could not bear him to be absent from her, even while he wrote a letter. Sometimes, when she felt too ill or weak to get up, she would even have the table moved to the side of her bed, and keep one of her hands clasped in his while he wrote.

"What do you think all my friends will

imagine has come to my handwriting?" he said one day as he looked up at her.

"Well—tell them why you write badly."

"I am writing to Aunt Theodora. Should you like to send any message?" he asked.

"Yes, my dear love; and that I hope I shall see her again, some time. Rochefort," continued his wife presently, in rather a strange voice, "shall I tell you why I hold your hand so much?"

"Yes, my darling."

"Because I am so afraid sometimes."

"What are you afraid of?"

"Partly—of your going away from me."

"But I will not go."

"I am afraid of something else, too," she continued, after a long pause, and with her eyes fixed wistfully before her—but not on his face. "When I first came home to you, I thought I didn't mind whether I died or not. Sometimes when I was in France, I longed to die. But now I don't; I am always longing and praying to get well, and yet I can't. I get always worse."

"Do you think you do?"

"I feel as if I did; in fact, I know it. Rochefort, do pray God every day to make

me well. You don't know how I long and long to get better now !"

. . . . Was it a prayer he could have offered, with his heart in it ?

After that ride to Gowerford he came into his wife's room as usual. Her nurse was working at her table near the fire; Nora lay in her white cashmere and pink silk dressing-gown on her sofa, with her hands wearily clasped over her head. Her little fingers were covered with rings, all of which she had had made smaller on purpose that she might wear them. It was strange how, with the resuming of something like the old life, had come back the faint shadow of her former love of dress, and of expenditure in what was decorative and rich; at the same time as, little by little, what she had gained in determination and strength of character, during her long exile and period of trial, had given way before the exhausting and depressing power of sickness, and to a childish clinging to, and absolute dependence on her husband.

Rochefort sent the nurse away, and sat down by his wife's sofa.

"Well?" she asked, looking up into his face with a sort of furtive anxiety, after he had kissed her, and made some general remarks about his ride; "and what did Dr. S. say?"

"He said that if it would be the least comfort to you to have other advice, he had no objection to holding a consultation with any physician we liked. I will write a note at once if you wish, though I thought I would speak again to you about it first."

"Who would you send for?"

"Sir —— ——."

"It will cost you a great deal for him to come, won't it?"

"That does not matter in the least. But Nora,"—here he made a long pause—"I don't want you to be very bitterly disappointed if, when he comes, he is not able to say anything very encouraging about you. Do you think you understand me?" He had been nerving himself for several hours to say some such words as these to her. He said them now with a beating heart, and with a painfully anxious look into her face, which she interpreted only too well. She turned very pale; then she began to tremble

and her lips to quiver. Her husband took her into his strong arms, and held her close against his breast.

"My own dear little girl—you would rather I told you of your danger than any one else, would not you? It is very hard for me to do it—God knows how hard—when my darling does not wish to leave me." His voice broke over the words, and she felt that his heart beat as he held her.

"But, Rochefort, do you mean there is really no hope for me?" inquired his wife in terror; "you have never told me so before."

"Dr. S. does not think I ought to tell you so now, Nora."

"Doesn't he? Then does he still think I may get better?" she inquired, a gleam of hope lighting her sunken eyes. It was terrible for him to have to meet them, and to feel the clinging of her arms about his neck, and not to dare to give her the hope she so longed for.

"I am afraid it is not that, Nora. He thinks it will needlessly depress you to know how ill you are. . . . But I think my darling will be brave enough to know that she is going where there is no more sick-

ness or pain of any kind." In spite of his effort to control himself, he broke down utterly for a moment.

But she did not shed a tear; she looked into his face with a despairing, dry-eyed misery that was worse than any weeping.

"But I don't want to die!" she said at last between her short gasps for breath. "I am not good enough. And I have lived such a little time! Oh God, what shall I do? what shall I do?" She covered her face with her hands, and swayed herself to and fro, as if in bodily pain.

Whatever he could say to console and strengthen her, he said; but his task was a very sad and hard one. Nora had never actually believed she was dying until now; now, when the fact of her danger was communicated to her by the one on whom she most entirely depended; and instead of any sense of resignation or relief — for God knows there is often relief enough felt by those who are nearing the end of pain — came only a despairing feeling of resistance to her fate.

"Mamma told me she thought I looked better, and that I had more colour; and she

was here only this afternoon," she plained in a hopeless tone of distress.

"Look at me, Nora," said her husband, raising her face with his hand, and making her look full into his eyes. "Should you like me to tell you I think you better? Should you trust me more for it?"

She looked up at him for a long time; and as she did so, she became a little calmer.

"Perhaps it is better I should know the truth," she said, turning away her head wearily. "I did not really believe poor mamma when she said I looked better. It only comforted me for a moment."

"If there is hope for you," continued her husband, "no words of mine will have taken it away. If anything can be done for you, it shall be done; you know that. I have only been preparing you for the worst, because I thought it right to do so. If God has ever willed that you should recover, He wills it now, in spite of all that I have said. . . . You must not forget that. . . . It is not I who hold your fate in my hands. It is in incomparably higher and greater hands than mine." . . . .

She was silent for a long time. At last she said—

"I am very tired now, Rochefort. Will you give me my wine? and then don't go. Read to me for a little."

"What shall I read to you?"

"Well," she answered, after lying still for a few minutes, with her eyes closed, "read me something from the Bible. The same place you read from last Sunday, when you wouldn't go to church."

When he was near the end of the chapter, and came to the words, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid," —having read with her hand locked in his from the beginning,—he felt her clasp become looser, and laying down the book, and looking at her, saw that she was asleep.

Her moods throughout her illness varied as constantly as the skies of the winter changed in hue. Sometimes she was strangely calm; at others irritable and restless to the last degree; sometimes almost resigned, and touchingly grateful for

what was done for her; sometimes—but very rarely now—almost hopeful. One day when she had been remarkably quiet, but too ill to rise from her bed, she said to her husband, who was resting on the sofa in her room, after a long ride (he had not hunted at all this winter), "Rochefort, isn't there a service in the Prayer Book for the 'Visitation of the Sick'?"

"Yes. Should you like me to read you some of it?"

"If you wouldn't mind, I think I should."

He rose from the sofa, took up her Church Service book—one she had been very fond of when she was first married, because it was bound in red velvet, and had a beautiful gold and ivory cross on the back—and leaning against her bed, read the service for the sick all through, but making many pauses to steady his voice. When he came to the end, she burst out into sudden weeping.

"I shall not be with you long," she said. "Oh, I am going so fast, Rochefort! I feel it now. I shall never, never be well again!"

But after that, she asked often for the service to be read to her; its tender, solemn, and pathetic beauty seeming—after the

first grief of feeling how sorrowfully applicable it was to her own case—to lull both her physical and mental suffering.

One evening, after her husband had held her for a long time in his arms, as she sat up in bed—she could not lie for very long together—she said to him—

"Rochefort, what does it mean by 'stedfast faith in thy Son Jesus' in what you have been reading? I think I believe; at least, of course, I don't suppose I have done anything . . . . to make me fit for heaven. . . . But then, sometimes I can't feel or believe anything."

She listened attentively, while he spoke of "the faith," concerning which she asked such childish but touching questions, and which had often been laid back in darkness from himself, when he most needed it,—of "the Master," of whom she had known so little, and he not enough (as none of us know enough!), but who would soon be so awfully and solemnly, and, we trust, tenderly present with her, in the "other world," of which He is the Life and Light.

She said at last, "I am sure you ought to have been a clergyman, Rochefort. You

are quite as good as Mr. Rutherford. I don't understand what he says to me half as well as I do what you say."

"My dear little wife, that is only because I have been so much less good."

"No," she answered, slightly shaking her head; "you were always good."

He said nothing to contradict her, not wishing her to talk too much. After some time, during which she had played absently with one of her diamond rings, fitting it first on to one finger, and then on to another, and then holding it in different lights, to watch the shining of the stones, she said, thoughtfully—

"Arthur, there is one thing I have always wanted to ask you very much. Should you mind my doing it now?"

"You may ask me whatever you like."

"Did you," she continued, "have you—do you mind telling me if, while I was away, you ever saw anyone you cared for better than for me?"

A crimson colour rushed all over his face as she spoke the words, and she saw it.

"Have you? Tell me," she persisted. "You know it cannot matter now. Sometimes I have thought you have."

"What has made you think so?"

"I cannot tell you; but I have felt sure of it over and over again. . . . Is it true?" she asked, keeping her eyes on his.

"Yes," he said at last, "it is true."

"But you never—you don't mean"—she could not go on, but raised herself suddenly on her elbow, and gazed at him with absolute terror in her face—"you don't mean——"

"No, my darling."

"Oh," she gasped out, as she sank back panting on her pillow, "I could not have borne it! It would have been useless talking to me, if you had done wrong. I should have believed in nothing."

It was a bitter and snowy winter, and the winter lasted during the three months of December, January, and February, and half through March. There were heavy falls of snow, and then weeks of cold thaw, and cloudy skies, and driving sleet.

One evening about the beginning of February, Mary Rudge, who had been up to the hall to inquire after the young mistress, came home to her comfortable lodge,

chilled and shivering, and knelt down before the blaze of the bright fire.

"What a fire you've made up, Sally," said she to her niece, who was now installed as "maid of all work" to her worthy uncle and aunt, Mary's time being very much taken up in attending to her rheumatic and now almost helpless husband; but it's a good thing to see, and does one good. It's awful cold out, and how the snow is falling!"

"How's the missis?" inquired Stephen, as he lighted his pipe.

"She's as bad as she can be. Elizabeth told me the doctor didn't expect her to last through the night."

"Well—well! God ha' mercy!" exclaimed old Stephen, "and I hope He will."

"Lawk! I didn't know she was as bad as that," said young Sally, staring, and coming up to the fire-place with a towel in her hand, with which she had been scrubbing her face till it was red, preparatory to tea.

"She's been ill long enough; you might have known," returned Mrs. Rudge, rising. "Well, I must take my shawl off. Come, bustle about, Sally."

"Her father came in the carriage, with Miss Heaton, yesterday afternoon," observed Sally, as she hung up the towel; "he looked awful 'down,' I thought."

"They didn't think she was so bad yesterday," returned Mrs. Rudge; "they tell me she was almost bright in the evening. But to-day she's been so fearfully bad, 'Lizabeth said she daren't go near the room. She only gets a little peace for half an hour or so at a time. Cut the bread and butter quick, Sally; I promised to go back again in an hour to inquire again."

"Has the master got no one with him?" asked old Stephen.

"Yes, there's Mrs. Rutherford in and out of the room; but she cannot stay more than a few minutes at a time, it upsets her so. And Mr. Rutherford's downstairs. The doctor was obliged to go—so Mrs. Robinson told me—about four o'clock, and he was to come back again as soon as he could; but he can do nothing. The master never leaves her. Cook told me he hasn't slept for nights, and he looks regular wore out."

"Have you seen him?" inquired her husband.

"Yes, I've seen him," replied Mary, raising her apron to her eyes, "but he didn't see or notice me. It was only for a moment."

By that morning's post had come a letter from Mrs. Longley, in which she said :—

"I should like you to tell Nora I forgive her, and that I beg her to forgive me if I was harsh to her when I saw her last. I think she will feel that, as your mother, and with no one else to care for but you, it has been difficult for me to help feeling very strongly and bitterly. But I will say no more about that now. I hope she sees Mr. Rutherford sometimes, and that she is preparing her mind for the last awful change. I have heard with pain that she has suffered as she has done; but now all will soon be peace! I hope you will assure her of my kind feeling towards her, and beg her to look only to her crucified Saviour and Redeemer. I will add no more, as I have no doubt you are in trouble, but remain, my dearest Rochefort, your ever loving and devoted mother."

Nora lingered until nearly twelve o'clock

that night. It was not until an hour or two before her death, that her husband's fortitude forsook him.

"It is killing me," he said, going out of the room, and wringing Mr. Rutherford's hands in his; "I cannot bear it. If I could only suffer for her!"

"It cannot be long now, my dear fellow," said Mr. Rutherford, with the tears running down his face; "let me go back with you."

Her struggle for breath was over when they re-entered the room; and Mr. Rutherford went up to the bed-side and took her hand in his.

She opened her eyes for a moment. "Pray," she whispered then, almost inaudibly.

The good clergyman prayed, with his heart in every pleading, urgent sentence, during the short time that was left to her of fainting life. He only ceased when she was evidently unconscious, and heard no more.

At last, as they watched in solemn stillness, they saw the awful, unmistakable shadow of Death settle gradually, and in absolute calm, upon the worn, beautiful face.

In the arms that would have shielded her from every earthly storm, on the breast that would have been her surest refuge in every grief or pain; pressed to the heart that—when it was all hers—she had slighted and flung away, she sank at last, in merciful unconsciousness, to rest.

* * * *

Oh, "Lord Ronald, Lord Ronald!" In how short a time after you had taken your "bride and darling" to your breast, did you follow her through the thick and falling snow to her last, lonely home; and leaving her there, cold and dead, come back to a widowed and loneless life. What a fair bridal it had been—on that summer's day—to be followed in so brief a space by mourning and by burial; the memory of the bride left—as a hallowed thing—to but one heart on earth.

* * * *

"Well, poor thing," said Mrs. Robinson, wiping her eyes as she sat at supper, on the day of the funeral; "it's been a blessed release for her, and no one could have wished her to have lingered. And master's behaved very handsomely to her, everybody must say that."

"And what I want to see now," said the butler, pouring out his glass of beer, "is something a little more cheerful than we've had here for some time back. And I hope it'll come to pass before a year or two's out, and then that we shall see an heir to the estate."

"Ah! it's a fine place to be without an heir," remarked the nurse, as she helped herself liberally to the cold beef; "I suppose the master 'll marry again."

"If he doesn't," pursued the butler, "I'm going to speak to him about doubling my wages, so that I may get up a little sum for settling down in something; or else I'm going to leave. I don't want to leave the place, nor the family, a long way from it; but this kind of thing doesn't suit my health," (he poured himself out a glass of Marsala, and filled the ladies' glasses afterwards); "it's very depressing; and what with no dinner parties or anything, one gets one's hand out at things, and that's not as it should be."

"I suppose the missis will come back now—old Mrs. Longley, I mean?" inquired the nurse.

"Sure to come back," returned Mrs. Robinson, "and be only too glad to. I should think she was perfectly sick of Brighton."

"The two months I was with her before Henry went up," said the butler, "she wasn't dull at all. There was always somebody with her or something going on. Why the Hon. Miss Belton was there over a month. And a nice girl she is, I can tell you."

"And always was," put in the housekeeper; "there's nobody I like better."

"Who is she?" asked the nurse.

"A daughter of Lord Belton—eldest son of the Earl of ——. She's master's cousin in a sort of way, and yet she isn't in another. Her mother and his are only half sisters; in fact, they're not really related at all, I believe."

"Cousin or no cousin," continued Mortimer, "she's what I call a first-rate sort of girl—Miss Belton. And the missis is no end fond of her. And another thing, from what Alison's told me, (where is Alison?) I believe Miss Belton's fond of the master. I shouldn't mind if she was fond of me, I know."

"What does she look like now?" inquired Mrs. Robinson.

"Oh, bonny and bright-haired, and full of sense, and a real out-and-out lady too. Plays beautifully on the piano; knows how to keep herself to herself, and doesn't give the young fellows their own way, I can tell you. She hasn't much to say to any of them. Rides her horse, too, as if she'd been taught; jolly firm hand she has, and her seat's fine. That's Miss Belton."

"Will the master marry her, do you think?" inquired the nurse.

"Why, she was here ever so long once, and he cared nothing about her," returned the housekeeper; "went on with his engagement to Miss Heaton through thick and thin. His 'ma was in an awful way about it, used to go on dreadfully, Alison told me. The marriage was very much opposed, I can tell you, Mrs. Fawcitt," concluded Mrs. Robinson, with a slight air of importance and of dignified reserve.

"Wasn't she good enough for him, then?"

"It wasn't so much that. Her father's a lawyer, though he isn't rich, and they're of no family; but she'd never anything in

her, and the missus couldn't bear her, nor her mother, nor *their set*, and nobody thought she cared enough for the master. Well, poor thing, she's dead and gone now, so we won't say anything against her, and she clung to him awfully at the last, as if she couldn't bear him out of her sight."

"No more she could, poor lady," returned Mrs. Fawcitt. "Again and again in the night has she begged me to call him up, and I've coaxed her and reasoned with her, and told her she wasn't so bad, and got her to put it off till the morning. Well, Mrs. Robinson, I'll leave you an address that'll always find me, and you be sure and send me cards, when the wedding comes off; and write me a note, and tell me something about it, for I shall want to know."

CHAPTER XIII.

Paris, July 27th, 18—.

"My dear Longley,

"Why have you not written to me lately? I should have written to you long ago, but that I have been so awfully busy. I have been doing a picture for the Vicomte de ——, and my aunt has been ill, and a certain little affair of my own has been worrying me more than it should have done. I am afraid I have got a little bit of that inconvenient commodity—heart—left inside me still, and I hoped that was burnt out of me long ago, with some other follies. I would tell you the story if I saw you. If I came over to England this autumn, would you have me for a week or two? I should like to see Riverswood, where there are so many 'moss-roses'—do you re-

member that? It was a fine 'salon' this year; I wish you could have seen it. You mightn't have cared for all the pictures, but you would have had to confess how far better we French paint than you English. I sent a St. Cloud scene on a 'fair' day. It was a pretty thing, and I sold it well.

"I have got something to tell you, which, I am afraid, will pain you a little, but there is no use keeping it back on that account; in fact it is infinitely better you should know. Angèle stayed longer in her convent than I thought she would; she only left it a few weeks ago, and she left it, or rather left Paris, with a young officer who adored her before you did, and who was under orders for Algiers with his regiment when you saw him that night of her fête at Auteuil. He is not a bad fellow, and he is a gentleman, and was very fond of her. He says he is going to marry her out there and risk the rest. He knows of Lionnet's existence—blast the fellow. Angèle told me she would never deceive another man as long as she lived, and she told him everything. She does not consider that stupid brute as her husband; nor is he her hus-

band. For myself, I think divorce should be made easier, everywhere. I can imagine no such torture as being bound to a man one hates and shrinks from, if one is a woman with a woman's ideas of virtue and duty. When it comes to it, I doubt, however, if Angèle will really let the fellow marry her, or indeed if he will do it. She has written to me once, and signed herself by her new name, but she does not say a word about the marriage. I am very sorry for the poor child, for I believe she will never be really happy in this sort of relation—call it what you like. She has been brought up too religiously for it, and she is too sensitive. But she told me she was pining to death in the convent, and that it seemed too dreadful for her life to be so lost. Besides she was reckless what she did. She was haunted by an image, which I firmly believe will follow her to her grave; for she does not *love* 'ce garçon;' she has married him because he implored her so desperately, and because she had nothing else to do with her life. She came to see me once, and she walked up and down the room, with her face pale, and her eyes red; her voice

shaking as she spoke. But I will not distress you by telling you how she looked or spoke. 'Anastase,' she said, 'if you ever see him again, tell him that he was right, and that I was wrong, and that I shall never forget him. I hope his wife will die, and then that he will be happy. Oh God! I *hope*, Anastase, that she will die' (it is impossible to describe to you the tone in which she said this). 'I pray that she may die. It is not wrong to pray that for him. If Lionnet were to die, I should feel as if I saw *heaven*. The whole world, and all life, would be another thing for me. I should feel as if a weight were off my heart, and chains off my limbs. I should breathe then, and never be afraid or ashamed of anything any more! * * * I believe, Anastase,' she went on, 'that Lionnet will live as long as—and longer than—I shall live. I have never believed he would die. I feel it in my heart that he will live—and live—and live! I shall *never* be free from him; and all my life will be a sort of sin, except to God. But God,' she said, with the tears streaming down her face, 'He will pity me, I believe, and forgive me.' I do not know.

The world seems to me hardly and strangely ordered for some people; and for myself I make my own creed, for I see no other that I can accept. Now I have told you what I promised to tell you, and more; and I will write about other things to you another time. Let me hear from you soon.

"I am,

"Always your old and attached friend,

"ANASTASE ST. CLAIR."

Rochefort received this letter about a year after his wife's death. When he had read it he went into his library and locked the door, and paced the room in uncontrollable misery, for two hours. He felt as if he had just watched the curtain drop over the last act in his life, and as if it had dropped, leaving murdered and bleeding figures stretched upon the floor behind. He did not know until that moment that the hope of one day seeing Angélique again, of *possibly* even having a right to her passionate love, still lived in an unacknowledged corner of his heart. Now he could never see her again; she was absolutely and for ever lost to him. For a little time the

delirious grief of knowing that she had separated herself from him of her own act overbalanced every other feeling ; he forgot that in all probability he could never have married her, and would never have dared, however virtually free she might have been —to look on her sweet and pleading face again. Until the pain inflicted by that hope-dispelling letter was a little dulled in its intensity, Rochefort was a changed man His mother could not make him out, and thought he must be ill.

"I am ill," he said one day, with a sort of irritable laugh ; "I have the horrors over me, as if I were going to have delirium tremens. Nothing is green, or bright, or fresh to me. I had better go away, and come back something less of a savage and a monomaniac."

His mother looked up frightened, and asked him what he meant.

"Oh, nothing," he answered, kissing her, "it's nothing. I've been worried, that's all, and I have headaches."

"You haven't been getting into any money difficulties, have you ?" inquired Mrs. Longley, rather nervously.

"Money difficulties!" retorted Rochefort, bursting suddenly into a roar of laughter; "why, what possesses you? As if I amused myself with that sort of thing!"

The laugh did him good, however, and the next day he went from home, and took London on his way back; and in the early summer went to Norway to fish, and was right enough long before then. We say "right enough." Who ever is quite right during the rest of his life, after some wounds?

CHAPTER XIV.

One autumn evening, Mrs. Longley and several lady friends were sitting or standing, in various attitudes betokening expectation, in the great drawing-room at Riverswood. One young lady sat by the open window, holding back the lace and satin curtains, her eyes, in which there was much wistful and anxious and loving light, steadfastly directed towards the drive through the Park.

"They are rather late, are not they?" inquired Mrs. Saville, taking out her watch.

"No," said the young lady at the window. "Rochefort said it would be about seven o'clock before they were home. Here they are, Aunt Emily!" she exclaimed, starting up, "the horses in a foam, and with the white roses in their blue knots. Then he has got it!"

She was first into the hall, and first at the door, the other ladies following her.

"By a majority of three hundred and twenty-seven," said Colonel Saville, who looked considerably flushed, and who put the grey hair back from his face with his pocket-handkerchief, as he spoke.

"Now, sir, are you pleased? and are you very sorry you ventured it?" inquired Miss Belton, who, in the prettiest of white muslin dresses with blue trimmings, and with her frizzy, auburn hair knotted up in a coil of modest, womanly plaits, leaned against a great carved Italian sideboard in the hall. "Are you sorry now, confess?"

"I should think he was sorry for nothing on earth at this moment, Miss Belton," said Sir Frederick Debenham, looking at her with some admiration.

"She is just as much to be congratulated as he is," pronounced Lady Clara, with a pleasant and bright smile. "She did not eat a morsel for lunch, Mr. Longley, and might have been *in articulo mortis* at this instant, but that we bribed her to drink with champagne; and if that sort of thing does not show—a-hem!—a remarkably strong interest in politics (for their own sake, of course), I don't know what does!"

"Did you like the champagne, Clara?

Was it good?" inquired Rochefort, who looked bronzed, and flushed, and handsome, as he threw himself on to one of the cool chintz ottomans in the drawing-room, and looked at the sweet, English, happy face of his betrothed. "I hope it wasn't the same stuff we had the other night. I don't know where I can have got it from."

"I don't want to talk about the champagne," said Clara. "Tell me some more about the election. I wish I had been there! I wish I had seen something of it!"

"You were much better here," answered the new member for Gowerfordshire, laughing. "It was very hot, exciting work, and the roads are very dusty. You are not going to turn a 'women's rights' lady, are you, Clara, and want to stand yourself next time?"

"What utter nonsense!" retorted she. "I would rather be a cook than a 'women's rights' lady; at least, than a 'women's rights' lady like some are."

"Bravo!" exclaimed all the gentlemen; and, "That's right, Miss Belton;" and "Stand to those colours all your life, and you'll do a noble work," said Colonel Saville.

"Oh, there are a great many excellent

and charming women who are doing good by advocating what they call their rights," said Rochefort, rising from his ottoman. "One cannot class them. You may go as far as Lady Hallingford, if you like, Clara, but no further."

"Only let us be saved, in the Lord's name, from going ahead like the Americans," put in Sir Frederick, who had travelled in America; "and don't let us teach our girls that they can talk, and declaim, and run about, and push themselves into notice, and speechify like men; or, rather, as no men of any modesty would do. Let us keep our girls English, and teach 'em they are women, and have got to mind the house and the bairns, while we do the electioneering, Miss Belton."

"That's right, Sir Frederick!" exclaimed Rochefort, laughing. "That's the sort of Toryism that's worth something. The real, good, old sort! Mind you keep me up to that, Clara. And now where's dinner, mamma? —and how long can you give us for dressing? I could eat horse, if you gave it me."

"And I could drink claret," said Frederick, sighing; "I am thirsty, and more than that I could not possibly say."

"Good Heavens!" said the master, ringing the bell with a peal that made the cook, Mortimer, and Mrs. Robinson nervous for half an hour after; "has nobody had anything to drink? Here—Edward, tell Mortimer to send us in some Moselle, hock, water, sherry, anything he has, directly. Have you drunk all the wine in the house, as well as that enormous quantity of champagne, Clara, that no one thought of offering us anything? Ah, Mr. Rutherford, there you are!—that's right! We're going off to dress directly. Have anything to drink first?"

The election was talked over at dinner, at dessert, and after dessert most of the evening; but at the end of the evening, for ten little minutes, the two people most concerned, and most interested in it of everybody, could speak together at last without audience.

"I am so glad, so happy!" said Clara, with actual tears in her eyes. "I should have been happy any-way of course; but now I am so proud, I hardly know where my head is. Did you telegraph to papa?"

"Yes, directly."

"Won't mamma be glad!"

"She won't care half as much as you. Why wouldn't you play this evening?"

"Because I knew my hands would tremble. It was terribly exciting sitting all day waiting for news, and only hearing once how things were going on. Beforehand, I thought I could be brave if you lost; but I shouldn't have been!"

"What would you have done? It would have been nobody's fault. You could have altered nothing."

"I should only have liked to have horse-whipped a hundred or two for not voting for you!" answered his bride-elect, with a bonny red colour mounting to her cheeks, and a sort of happy flash in her grey eyes.

"Are you quite sure it is not all nonsense that you care for me so much?" asked Rochefort, presently.

"Nonsense?—Ah—take care you don't tempt me to tell you too much about it, Mr. Longley! Perhaps I should tell you more than you cared to hear."

"No, that is impossible."

"Is it impossible?" asked Clara, speaking thoughtfully, and very quietly, as she looked up at him.

"Quite impossible," he answered, "that I should know too surely, and too perfectly, how my wife is going to love me and help me, and whether she will be able to give me her whole heart. Will you tell me now, Clara?"

I think she told him after that; told him enough to make him feel as if before him "there was a new heaven and a new earth," of which she would be the life, and light, and joy!

One morning, about a year after the events just recorded, Mr. and Mrs. Rutherford were in their garden, Mr. Rutherford pacing about and smoking, and Mrs. Rutherford, with the energy and practical usefulness peculiar to the weaker sex, using her trowel and a rake vigorously, a coarse apron in front of her, and a handkerchief tied over her bonnet. All at once they both heard the opening of the little wicket-gate leading into the churchyard; then it was banged to with a sharp sound, and directly after, came a tread on the gravel pathway leading to the "bower," where they—we mean where she—was at work.

"There he is," said Mrs. Rutherford, throwing down her trowel; "now we shall hear," and she walked a few steps forward, to meet a young fellow in velveteen shooting costume, a felt hat, a gun over his shoulder, and followed by a couple of excessively excited dogs.

"Down, Floss!—off that bed, Nigel! good-gracious, look at the dogs!" exclaimed Mrs. Rutherford. "Well, Rochefort, I'm on end with impatience, what's the news?"

"You only look as if you knew more about it than I do myself, Mrs. Rutherford," answered the young man, laughing; "off there, Nigel! Yes, you may congratulate me," he added, holding out his hand to the good clergyman, who came up at that moment.

"Then I should think you're a happy man," said the latter, smiling, and shaking away, in a manner that only a strong arm like the one he was handling could have stood without danger of dislocation; "and which is it—girl or boy?"

Just as he asked the question, such a peal was begun upon the old church bells as had never been heard on them for years. They were rung as if for twenty weddings, or as

if every man who pulled the ropes was going to be married himself.

"Now, you hear," said Rochefort; "they are ringing for the birth of my son and heir, Mrs. Rutherford," and he took off his hat, with a sort of mock ceremony, and stooping down, returned the kiss which her kind old lips had given him in the first moment of her thankfulness and joy.

"You don't say so?—Well, it's the best news I've had brought to me since you were born yourself, Rochefort," said his old friend, taking up her apron and wiping her eyes therewith.

"And God bless your son; and may the bells ring him health and happiness!" was the clergyman's hearty and cheery wish.

"Thank you very much. You are both very good."

"But bless me, dear, dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Rutherford; "if I haven't forgotten all this time to ask after your wife, Rochefort. How is she?"

"Oh, Clara's as well as possible. I have just seen her and my boy."

"And he's a great beauty, of course?"

"Naturally. How could you expect anything else of my son?"

"And I suppose, as Francis says, you're happy now?" inquired Mrs. Rutherford, with tears, like beads, still shining in her eyes.

"I am so happy I can scarcely believe in my existence at present."

"I can hardly believe it is less than a year since we first saw your wife's bright face in the old Riverswood pew, Rochefort," laughed the clergyman. You have begun well. I don't think there's much fear now of the old race falling through."

"No, please God!" answered the master; "and now I must be off. I have to earn my wife's dinner for to-morrow by the sweat of my brow," he added. "By-the-bye, will you have me in for supper to-morrow night? If you will, I will dine early. I can do as I like, you see, while Clara's 'hors de combat;' and I see I'm going to lead a wretched life, and only be let in there on sufferance for a quarter of an hour at a time, and so on. So I intend to take to dissipation and fast life—may I come?"

"What's to be the child's name?" Mrs.

Rutherford called after him, as he walked away.

"What? I didn't hear."

She repeated her question.

"Oh, I suppose we shall call him after my patron saint; I think so at least. Good-bye."

"Who does he mean by his patron saint?" asked Mrs. Rutherford, in some astonishment, after Rochefort had gone.

"King Alfred."

"Was he a saint? I thought he was only a king?"

"He isn't among the calendar of saints."

"Well, I don't understand what you mean, you or he either," returned Mrs. Rutherford, who was busy again with her trowel and her pots; "however, Alfred's a pretty name anyway."

"I will read you something about him to-night," said her husband, with his pipe still in his mouth, and his hands leisurely thrust into his pockets; "you might as well know something of him, as the young heir's going to be called after him."

Before supper in the evening Mr. Rutherford, after getting off a letter or two, and carrying them out to the hall table, where he would see them in the morning when he

went his rounds, shuffled back into his study, where his wife sat at her stocking-knitting, and then shuffled up to the book-case. (Why are men so perfectly happy in slippers with the heels trodden down? They have as great an affinity for them as for an old coat.) Having gazed upwards through his spectacles for some minutes, he finally selected a thin, red book, with which he returned to his arm-chair, blowing the dust off the top.

"King Alfred," began the clergyman, as he seated himself, "was the only man of his age who cared to write in Anglo-Saxon, so that the people could understand him. Everyone else wrote in Latin, as I suppose you know."

"Very likely I did, but I've forgotten," returned his wife. "You're not going to read me any Anglo-Saxon, are you?"

"As I don't understand it myself I can't. I was going to read you an English translation, done by an American, of some of Alfred's last words to his son. It is rather a long poem, and the writer of it not positively known; but the beauty of it is the condensation of some of the king's finest wishes and most pathetic prayers for the

welfare of his son and country, after he—the shepherd of them both—was gone."

"I didn't know you thought so much of him!" remarked Mrs. Rutherford, looking up in some amazement. "What did he do?"

"If I were to tell you only half what he *did*, my dear, and thought, and was, we might sit here till night to-morrow. All I'm going to do now is to read you a few lines from this translation, and you must expect them to sound a little old-fashioned. It's hard work to translate faithfully from Anglo-Saxon into modern English.

"These," continued Mr. Rutherford, "are said to be the words of England's own darling, England's shepherd, England's king. Listen to them, my dear.

"Thus quoth Alfred: 'Wealth is but a curse,
If wisdom be not added to the purse.
Though a man hold an hundred and threescore
Acres of tilth, with gold all covered o'er,
Like growing corn—it all is nothing worth
Unless it proves his friend, not foe, on earth."

"Thus quoth Alfred: 'Never let the young
Despair of good; nor give himself to wrong;
Though to his mind right come not as it should,
And though he take no joy in what he would.
For Christ, when he will, gives good after ill,
And wealth by his grace, in trouble's hard place,
And happy the mind that to him is resigned!'

"Thus quoth Alfred: 'When a child is wise,
That is indeed a father's blessed prize.
Hast thou a child?—while yet a little one,
In man's whole duty, timely teach thy son;
When he is old, he still shall keep the track,
And for all cares and troubles pay thee back.'

* * * *

"Thus quoth Alfred: 'If thou growest old,
And hast no pleasure, spite of weal and gold,
And goest weak, then thank thy Lord for this,
That He hath sent thee *hitherto* much bliss;—
For life, and light, and pleasures past away;
And say thou, come, and welcome, come what may!'

"'Worldly wealth and strength
Come to the worms, and dust, and death at length,
Though one be king of earth and all its power,
He can but hold it for life's little hour.
Thy glorious state will work thee grievous fate,
Unless thou purchase Christ, before too late.
Therefore in living well, at God's behest,
By serving Him, we serve ourselves the best.'

"Thus quoth Alfred: 'My dear son, come near,
Sit thou beside, and I will teach thee here;
I feel mine hour is well-nigh come, my son;
My face is white; my days are almost done:
Soon must we part; I, to another throne,
And thou, in all my state, shalt stand alone.—
I pray thee,—for mine own dear child thou art,
Lord of this people,—play their father's part!
Be thou the orphan's sire, the widow's friend,
Comfort the poor man, and the weak defend.

With all thy might
Succour the right,
And be strong
Against the wrong:
And thou, my son, *by law thyself restrain,*
So God shall be thy guide and glorious gain!—
Call thou for help on Him in every need,
And He shall give thee greatly to succeed."

"It is very beautiful," said Mrs. Rutherford; "he must have been very good."

"Good!" echoed her husband, laying down the book. "Yes, he was good! There has never been a king on this earth like him—unless we may reckon as a king one who had not the name, but in almost every sense the spirit, of kingship—in his wonderful and manly purity, knowledge, dignity, sympathy, and power of self-sacrificing work. And if we ever see another like either of them on or near our English throne, we may thank God—that's all."

"Were you speaking of the Prince Consort just now?" asked his wife.

"Yes," returned the clergyman.

"How did you get that book about King Alfred?" inquired she presently.

"I believe Rochefort gave it to me—or I bought it, I forget which—when he first began with this 'divine furore' of his, and

hadn't learnt any Anglo-Saxon. Don't you remember his learning, or rather studying it? Not! You women forget everything of this kind. Get him on the subject some day, and make him show you all his books about King Alfred. Why, I can remember him going up to London to hunt them up; and they are all beautifully bound in calf and gold, in the library. He flushes up to this day if you only utter 'his king's' name before him."

"I don't believe I've ever heard him speak of him," observed Mrs. Rutherford.

"I dare say you haven't. I don't think I have more than three times; and one of those times was years ago, when he was about eighteen, and came to see me here, and we had a long talk in this room, that I shall never forget. His father was not a man for him to make a friend of—at that age at least—and the boy came and made a friend of me. I remember it as if it was yesterday, and how he walked up and down the floor with his face flushed, and sometimes tears in his eyes. But I've known Rochefort ever since that night."

"It is not many who know him," said his wife, beginning to wind up her knitting

preparatory to supper; "but he's a fine fellow."

"Nobody knows him entirely," returned Mr. Rutherford, "nor ever will. But he has infinitely more in him than has ever come out yet. Life is only beginning for him—at least real life. I hope the life of his heart has stood its last shock, and braved its last tempest, and that there will be a long time of 'set fair.'"

"It looks like it, with that charming little wife of his," returned Mrs. Rutherford; "she's not a bit foolish, and she has plenty of spirit, and a thorough lady; and she adores the ground under his feet, and the very air over his head."

"And that's just what she should do, isn't it?" said Mr. Rutherford, laughing; "and there's not a man on earth, Sarah, that isn't the better for his wife adoring him, if she doesn't spoil him."

"And Clara will never do that," pronounced the lady; "but here's supper, Frank; take that big book off the table, please."

"And while supper's being laid," said Mr. Rutherford (who was somewhat inspired this evening, as all good and educated men are at times, especially when

they get hold of a good book), "just listen to this. It will finish our evening well, Sarah, and be as good as prayers—better than many."

Resuming the spectacles, and standing on the hearth-rug, he read:

"Forgive now, ever good! and give to us,
That in our minds we may upsoar to thee,
Maker of all things! through these troublous ways;
And, from amidst these busy things of life,—
O tender Father—wielder of the world—
Come unto thee! and then through thy good speed,
With the mind's eyes well opened, well may see
The welling spring of good! oh, then make whole
The eyes of our understandings, so that we,
Father of angels, fasten them on thee!
Drive away this thick mist, which long while now
Hath hung before our minds' eyes, heavy and dark.
Enlighten now these minds' eyes with thy light,
Master of life!—for Thou, O tender Father,
Art very brightness of true light thyself;
Thyself, Almighty Father, the sure rest
Of all thy fast and true ones.
Thou art thyself the way, and leader too,
Of every one that lives, and the pure place—
That the way leads to!—all men from this toil,
Throughout the breadth of being, yearn to thee!"

"Is that King Alfred, too?" inquired Mrs. Rutherford.

"That is King Alfred, too," answered the clergyman, closing his book.

THE END.

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